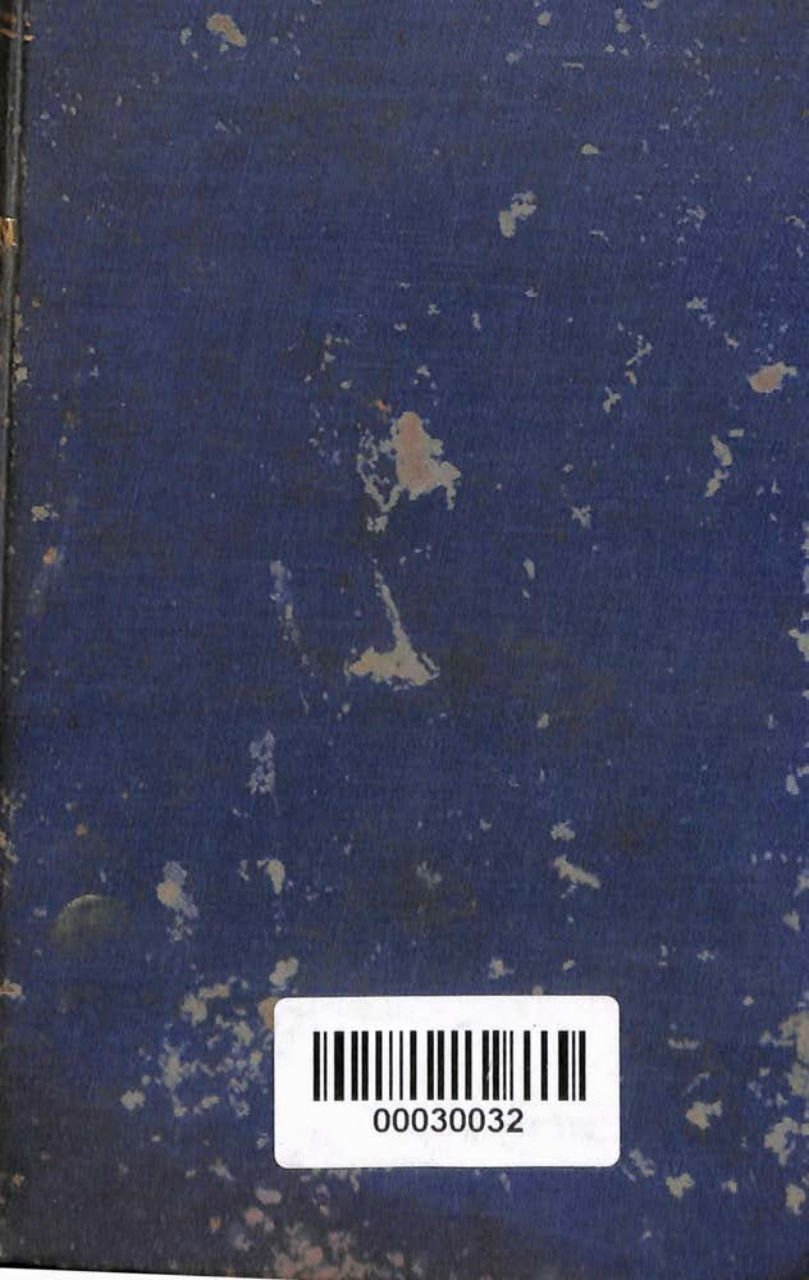
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THE

EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN

OF MEXICO.

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WITH MAXIMILIAN IN MEXICO.

FROM THE NOTE-BOOK OF A MEXICAN OFFICER.

BY

MAX., BARON VON ALVENSLEBEN,

LATE LIEUTENANT IN THE IMPERIAL MEXICAN ARMY.

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LONDON:

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1867.

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TO

THE MEMORY

OF

H. I. M. THE LATE EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN

OF MEXICO,

A PRINCE SINGULARLY BRAVE, UNSELFISH, AND HONEST,

WHO, AFTER DEVOTING HIS UTMOST ENERGIES TO

THE RESCUE OF A MAGNIFICENT COUNTRY AND AN INTELLIGENT NATION

FROM THE MISERIES ENTAILED

BY YEARS OF ANARCHY AND CIVIL DISCORD,

FELL A VICTIM TO THE TREACHERY OF A TRUSTED SERVANT,

AND WAS BARBAROUSLY ASSASSINATED AT

QUERETARO, JUNE 19, 1867.

PREFACE.

ANIMATED by a feeling of the deepest respect and the most sincere sympathy for the unfortunate Emperor MAXIMILIAN, and with the view of contributing my mite to a correct appreciation of his exalted character, I herewith bring before the public, in the shape of a condensed narrative, my military experiences in the service of the Mexican Empire.

A main object I have steadily kept in view, in drawing up these Memoirs, has been to afford a vivid picture of the Mexican national character in all its phases.

It has further been my endeavour to clear up the still dubious history of the fallen Empire, so far as my personal adventures were linked with its course.

Free from all prejudices against nationalities other than my own, I have been careful, in speaking of foreign troops, to keep strictly within the bounds of truth, and to ascribe to them no acts but such as have come within the scope of my own knowledge.

Finally, I leave to the impartial and candid reader to decide, from the following pages, how far I have succeeded in the task I have ventured to undertake.

MAX., BARON VON ALVENSLEBEN,

Late Lieutenant Imperial Mexican Army.

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CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE FOR MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

In January 1866, the last regiments of the United States volunteers, whose time of service had expired, were released from military allegiance to the stars and stripes. Among the officers thus thrown out of employment was the writer of the following pages.

Ever since the subjugation of the South, I had felt a strong interest in the drama gradually unfolding its romantic and unexampled vicissitudes in Mexico. The tie of sympathy, evoked by community of origin and language, had first attracted my attention to the efforts of the Archduke Maximilian to create a well-ordered empire out of the ruins of a republic crumbling into chaos. Like hundreds and thousands of my countrymen, I had looked on with mingled misgiving and admiration at the chivalrous gallantry with which he threw all his energies into what we now know was, from

the outset, an utterly hopeless task. Himself frank, candid, and open, a man of the nicest honour, and a gentleman in the noblest sense of that evilly-entreated word—thoroughly honest and sincere in his wish to regenerate his adopted country—the Emperor Maximilian's one great defect was inability to believe in the hideous depths of corruption and baseness to which some specimens of human nature can descend.

Well, he is gone, and has fallen a victim to his credulity. Faithful to the traditions of his House, he has gone down to the grave with dignity. Rather than live in what a perhaps overstrained sense of honour led him to fear the world would fancy a condition of disgrace, he has preferred to fight his battles manfully to the last, and then to die. When Time has cooled the passions of his enemies, and moderated the shock felt by his friends at his bloody and untimely fate, posterity will sit in judgment upon his character. The verdict will weigh less heavily upon the betrayed than his betrayers.

The close of the American war, and the vivid desire I felt to plunge again into active service, coupled with my fervid admiration for the Emperor's personal character, all united to induce me to

offer my sword to the struggling empire. Reaching New Orleans upon my way southwards, I met an old comrade, Lieutenant von L., in that city. His object was in so far similar to mine, that he also desired to rejoin active service as speedily as possible. I acquainted him with my intention, and he agreed to bear me company.

Fortune seemed favourable to us at starting, for we succeeded in making the acquaintance of a merchant owning two vessels, who was so generous as to offer us a free passage. The smaller of his vessels, a schooner called the 'Little Mary,' was loading with a cargo of spirits for Matamoras, and would put to sea in a few days.

The 'Little Mary' was a decked two-master, with one cabin. She had been frequently sold, had as frequently changed her captains, and possessed a good character for seaworthiness. Her present crew consisted of captain, mate, two sailors, and the cook.

Captain W. was one of those men who use up everything and waste nothing, who strive after practical results by every possible road except that of illusion. If fickle Fortune, whom he would gladly have caught, fluttered out of his reach, so that it seemed as if he would have to go far in

her pursuit, he let her quietly escape, without taking a dozen steps in chase. He was a man of few words, but a good listener. If you can picture to yourself a short stout figure, in complexion rather more than fair, rather less than rosy, with a smirking countenance, in age a little over forty, you will have a tolerable idea of the body in which this eccentric seaman's character was enclosed.

John, the mate, was a personage of altogether different mould. He had very slight acquaintance with his calling. When the wind chopped round and the captain looked black, when dark clouds presaging storm began to gather in the sky, John, who seemed quite familiar with his commander's humours, and to presume upon the knowledge, sat placidly perched up in his berth, and thrummed a toneless guitar.

The two sailors and the cook, Americans, with nothing to distinguish them from the ordinary class of mariner, were only engaged for the voyage.

At six P.M. one February evening, Lieut. von L. and I made the best of our way to the harbour, for the 'Little Mary' was to sail that night. Arriving on board, we handed over our arms—consisting of a sabre and a revolver apiece—to the

captain's charge, and then stretched ourselves comfortably upon deck.

Though early in the year, the weather was as fine as in the middle of summer. The setting sun gilded with its declining rays the roofs and spires of the Crescent City. Before us stretched the banks of the Mississippi, clothed with groups of trees; farther away, on either side of the river, rose gentle grassy hills, their slopes gradually undulating until their outlines melted into the horizon. While we were lost in contemplation of the scene, the 'Little Mary' had been taken in tow by a tug, and the view on either bank began to glide past our vessel like the pictures in a panorama. The scene gradually disappeared, and a shining disc announced the advent of the 'lesser light' of the moon. As we rapidly descended the river, a gentle haze rose from the surface, through which we could still discern the plantations following in rapid succession along the shores of the Father of Waters.

We supped on deck, and remained in silent enjoyment of our cigars until the mosquitoes drove us below. But the heat and closeness of the little cabin, in which five persons were densely packed,

rendered it impossible to endure the stifling atmosphere. No choice remained but to carry our blankets into the open air, and become the resistless victims of the blood-suckers.

By morning the 'Little Mary' had reached the bar, and, after a slight detention opposite the pilot station, we succeeded in passing the delta of the river. Numbers of vessels were running in as we came out. The coast of Florida lay upon our right, clothed with a host of small coasters, which pursue a large carrying trade between the ports of that state and New Orleans.

It was pleasant to see so many snow-white sails flecking the ample bosom of the sky-blue Gulf, and sparkling in the brilliant tropical sun. Upon this tranquil sea, in that lovely climate, where the winds of heaven only seem gently to kiss the cheek, I may safely say that I have never felt a single moment of *ennui*. Mere existence there seems the perfection of life; to behold the beauties of sea and sky almost equals the delight of action; to drink in that luxurious and intoxicating air is of itself enjoyment. Peacefully as ourselves, the vessel glided easily across this happy sea. No apprehensions agitated our minds. The weather was magnificent, and the wind so equable

that we made for the port of our destination under continuous full sail.

The first few days of the voyage passed without much conversation. On board ship, the people whom accident has collected within the space of a few square feet are rarely very sociable until drawn closer by some common sentiment, such as fear. Before that true leveller and democrat, indifference, pride, diffidence, and all the host of individual characteristics composing a man, take wings and fly away.

The Gulf continued lovely, and the sky was still serene. Von L. and I amused ourselves with fishing. Though neither of us were gifted with the skill or the imperturbable calm of the practised angler, my comrade, who had more patience than I, succeeded in catching a savoury addition to our frugal dinner.

At noon the captain always retired to his cabin, spread maps and charts before him upon the table, and solemnly calculated the position of the ship. Then he came up to us with the consciousness of superior science radiating from his features, and reported in a dignified way the result of his labours.

'We are now in such a latitude and longitude.

Since leaving port we have made so many leagues. If the wind holds good, we shall run into Bagdad harbour on such a day.'

These crumbs of comfort were all that fell to our share. They were not many; still, more than we could have gathered for ourselves. 'Knowledge is power;' and fully did our stout little captain display his pride in exhibiting so much nautical lore.

Towards noon upon the third day of our voyage the sky was obscured; thick dark clouds gathered across the hitherto smiling blue, and a ripple brushed the waters of the Gulf. A stiff breeze sprung up, that rapidly increased to a gale, and made us all look very grave. The captain gave orders to reduce the canvas and take in the main-sail. The sea foamed angrily round our little craft, which soon became the plaything of the waves. The 'Little Mary's' previous good character now proved itself fully justified, as she skimmed like a seamew over the crests of the billows. Actuated by the natural alarm with which the sight of such a spectacle would inspire every prudent captain, our commander ordered the mate —who had laid aside his guitar by this time—to descend into the hold and look after the cargo.

Some heavy shocks which the 'Little Mary' had undergone made Captain W. apprehend that some of the casks, packed rather hurriedly, might possibly have broken loose from their lashings.

After an hour's examination, the mate thrust his head up the hatchway, and I fancied I could detect some consternation in his features. The perspiration rolled in thick drops down his sunburnt face as he stepped up to deliver his report. Noticing his embarrassment, the captain at once determined to cut short his subordinate's usually highly metaphorical mode of speech. Sharp, quick, and laconic, our practical skipper instantly went straight to his point.

'All right in the hold, eh?' he demanded.

'As regards the cargo, captain, everything is in perfect order,' was the reply.

'No casks staved in, none broken loose?'

'As I have already had the honour to report, captain, nothing is wrong with the cargo. But,' continued the mate, after a pause, 'just underneath the bowsprit, two feet below the water-line, I observed a leak, through which the water's rushing in like——'

A curse broke from the captain's lips. 'Deuce take the fellow!' he shouted, diving down the

hatchway. 'Why didn't you say so at once? All hands to the pumps!'

'But the cargo, Captain W.,' continued the mate, slowly following his superior, 'the cargo is in the best of order.'

Examination showed the leak to be really serious. The men were set to the pumps, but their labour made little impression upon the depth of water in the hold. Our only resource was to make for port with all possible speed. Sail was crowded on the ship to the extent of her capability, and the 'Little Mary' flew over the waves with great velocity.

The night was pitch-dark. Not a star was to be seen in the firmament, and not the slightest object was visible upon the deck, save the white crests of the waves, that broke every now and then hissing over the bulwarks, and wetted us to the skin. It will easily be supposed that none of us closed an eye.

There was no change in the leaden aspect of the sky next morning, and little hope of the weather clearing up. The men were worn out with incessant pumping, and my comrade and I readily took our turn at the work. We continued hard at it for several hours, but the unaccustomed kind of labour ultimately proved too much for us.

Thoroughly exhausted, we withdrew to the cabin, and slept through all the noise and turmoil of the storm.

Towards evening, to our great delight, the wind veered to a favourable quarter. We were able to get at the leak, and keep out the water by temporary packing. Another sleepless night followed, though less dark than its predecessor; the moon at intervals showing her pallid visage through the rack of clouds. Then came a tranquil morning, and the storm was at an end. The waves sank gradually to repose, the clouds cleared off the sky, and about noon the sun once more showed us his broad and smiling face. A light breeze sprang up, freshening to a pleasant wind, that sped us rapidly along our course; and at nightfall we again enjoyed the welcome spectacle of a dark-blue canopy spreading above us, studded with millions of brightly shining stars.

Our captain had been prevented by the storm from taking his latitudes, but he now displayed a fresh phase of his science by bringing his sextant upon deck and taking a lunar observation. Then he shut himself up in the cabin to work out his reckoning. Presently he announced with greater pomposity than ever that, if the wind held

good, the 'Little Mary' would be at anchor off Bagdad at latest by five o'clock the following day. His prophecy sent us to bed in the best of spirits.

When we awoke next morning, we found the ship had been already a couple of hours in harbour. Numbers of small coasters lined the shores of the Gulf. The yellow waters of the Rio Grande, which dribbles lazily into the bay close by Bagdad, were distinctly traceable for a long distance before they became absorbed into the larger volume. Many American vessels were in sight, their rigging curiously ornamented with the fruits of the earth. Ropes of bananas, intermixed with yellow gourds, hung from the shrouds, while nets full of delicious oranges and juicy pine-apples were suspended from the quarter-deck boats.

Bagdad is an unimportant little place, very similar in appearance to other small Mexican towns. It possesses no regular harbour in which ships can seek shelter from stress of weather, for the countless sandbanks stretching along the shores of the Gulf render it dangerous for vessels of large tonnage to approach. When a storm is coming on, ships lying at anchor are forced to put out to sea.

The captain gave orders to hoist the signal for a pilot, and shortly afterwards a boat put off from

shore. To our great surprise, but apparently not to that of the skipper, it came up close to the bar, then coolly tacked and made for the land.

The captain then explained that there was not wind enough upon the bar to run in safely. We passed the entire day in the utmost impatience, without the least prospect of getting ashore. Day-break next morning was very fine; the sun lighted up the grassy slopes extending along the shore, and to our great delight a stiff breeze set in steadily from the east. A pilot-boat soon danced across the waves and laid alongside. The captain handed out our arms; we bade him farewell, and sailed away for the shore with cheerful hearts. A few minutes brought us safely across the bar, and a few more landed us in safety at Bagdad.

Enthusiastically I hailed that lovely land, whose natives are so serious in their passions and so melancholy in their joy, and which is so magnificently favoured by an unequalled sun. This contrast between the brilliant splendour of the sky and the gloominess of the inhabitants, between the lofty grandeur of the rocks and mountains and the triviality and poverty of the people, render Mexico the true home of meditation and the inner reflective life. Here are no philosophical reflections,

no abstruse speculations, no formless dreams. Every phase of existence is so decidedly positive, that one is insensibly led back to the fundamental idea of death, the most positive and unavoidable of all things here below.

But if Mexico suggests serious ideas, and the full bigotry of religious fanaticism, it gives birth also to boundless love and irreconcilable hate. Side by side with their inclination to earnest thought, the minds of its inhabitants need immeasurable and constant exertion to tear them from the current upon whose stream they are borne along. The contrasts met with at every step in this country are incredible. The hand that has just driven home the dagger next moment counts the rosary; the amorous song of the bravo resounds in the shadow of the cloister; the licentious dance is succeeded by the religious procession.

Similarly to the Spaniard, two courses of existence only lie open to the Mexican. He either becomes an ascetic, or leads a life as grandiose, as fiery, and as exaggerated, as the genius of his native tongue. He passes his days in the quiet peace of meditation and prayer, or allows himself to be carried away by the full tide of violent passions. Every middle path is closed to him.

His mind is in accord with the glare and heat of his country. Neither possesses gradual and gentle transitions; every change in man and nature is sudden and instantaneous. No twilight intervenes between night and day; summer flees at the sight of winter. There is no spring in Mexico, and no autumn; nor has the Mexican any idea of moderation or indifference. He loves or he hates; he applauds his friend, or slays his enemy. He is either a saint or a fiend. Like every good Catholic, he of course believes in purgatory; but his faith in an intermediate state is based solely upon the authority of his church. Nothing in his surroundings, nothing in his own feelings, arouses this belief within him; for life in Mexico is either hell or paradise.

CHAPTER II.

SEPARATION.

CHAPTER II.

FURNISHED with papers identifying us as officers recently in the service of the United States, my friend and I were able to satisfy the scrupulous custom-house official of our right to carry arms. He looked at us from head to foot, grumbled an unintelligible word or two—probably not over-complimentary, but for that we cared little—then turned away.

Finding upon enquiry that we were not likely to get any conveyance to Matamoras within a week, we decided upon crossing the Rio Grande to Clarksville, whence we understood a diligence went as far as Brownsville daily.

We waited at Clarksville several hours before the diligence was ready to start. When it finally lumbered up to the posting-house, which was also an inn, we found the interior of the vehicle already occupied, and were forced to take places on the

box beside the driver. After some further delay, the postmaster gave the signal, the lash gave evidence to the cattle of what they had to expect, and off we rattled.

Lighting a cigar, I chatted, now with my comrade, who was absorbed in reflection, now with the talkative driver. He turned out to be an Irishman, Mike O'Reilly, who had already coached the diligence, backwards and forwards, along the same road for twenty years, and had many an interesting bit of life and experience to tell. From time to time Mike groped in his pocket, drew forth a leathern pouch from which he extracted a lump of pigtail, substituted the new quid for the old one, and whacked his horses with refreshed enjoyment.

The district through which we passed was anything but picturesque. The turbid, yellow waters of the Rio Grande rolled lazily down towards the Gulf upon our right. On the left, the eye strayed across broad, uncultivated flats, thickly covered with cactus, tropical weeds, and dwarf palms, but without a single tree. Further on, this last feature of the landscape changed; wide stretches of forest and meadow lands, with grazing herds of cows and horses, alternating by the side of the road.

The air was close, and the sun intolerably hot. The dust occasioned by our team soon caused us great annoyance. It was a vast relief when, as we swept round the corner of a wood, Mike turned to me with a grin, and pointing with his whip to a small collection of houses a little ahead, chuckled :—

'There's the half-way station, where you'll find good refreshments.'

In less than five minutes our cumbrous vehicle halted before a plain-looking, straw-thatched inn, roughly built of wood, bearing the harmonious sign of 'The Cat and Fiddle.'

The *coupé* of the diligence was occupied by four passengers—an elderly gentleman, his grown-up son and daughter, and the young lady's maid. The two females sprang out with the active alacrity natural to their age, and took up their positions under the leafy roof of a wide-spreading venerable tree standing before the inn. The father, a man about sixty, followed slowly and cautiously. The air of pride and dignity in his dark brown features, the thick, close eyebrows almost meeting above his nose, and his penetrating large black eyes, showed him to possess a resolute and vehement character. He was nearly six feet in height, yet

carried himself more erect than many men far his juniors. The son bore a striking resemblance to his father, was of similar stature, and equally distinguished appearance, with, of course, the immeasurable advantage of youth.

My friend and I also took up our places under the large tree, at which there were several tables.

The young lady at once attracted the attention of my comrade, whose eyes were constantly fixed upon her. Being naturally cooler and less impressionable than he, I soon perceived that she was fully conscious both of her own attractions and the admiration they called forth. Lovely she undoubtedly was, and the elegant simplicity of her travelling dress greatly enhanced her beauty. A slight movement of her head, caused apparently by her wish to escape the ardent glances of her admirer, had thrown her hood back upon her shoulders, and gave to view a set of charming, regular features, surrounded by a wealth of long silken black curls. Intelligence and amiability lighted up her face. There was an inexpressible charm in the graceful gesture with which at times she lifted up her head and shook back her flowing locks from her temples.

My comrade was thoroughly enchanted. With the practised ease of a man used to good society, he soon managed to draw our male neighbours into conversation, which led to mutual introduction. We found the old gentleman was called Don Juan Z., his son Fernando, and his charming daughter Señora Maria.

Lieutenant von L. was not tardy in availing himself of the opportunity thus offered, and employed all the tact and resources at his command to draw the Señora into conversation. But his success was not equal to his wishes. The young lady replied courteously but briefly to his remarks, and betrayed no token of feeling especial interest in her new admirer. The general discourse was carried on in French, and turned mainly upon the position of the contending parties in Mexico.

We resumed our journey, and reached Brownsville about six in the evening. The diligence halted at an hotel bearing the sign of St. Michael. Señora Maria and her maid disappeared upon the staircase leading to the upper regions, while my comrade hastened to assist Don Juan in alighting. The old gentleman returned thanks with grave politeness, and expressed a wish that the whole party should dine in company. The eagerness

with which my friend accepted the invitation may be supposed.

In all my wanderings up and down upon the face of the earth, it has never happened to me to see a man so thoroughly and instantaneously captivated by a pretty face as was Lieutenant von L. by the charms of the handsome Mexican. Utterly forgetful of my presence, he strode up and down the apartment into which we were ushered to obliterate from our dress and persons the damages of the road, speaking to himself and gesticulating vehemently, with every sign of an absorbed and preoccupied mind. I asked him at last whether he meant to join us at dinner. He turned upon me with a radiant face.

'Didn't you notice the look that lovely creature cast upon me as she entered the house?' he demanded eagerly.

'Can't say I did,' I answered dryly.

'Man of marble!' he exclaimed passionately. 'Its fire would have melted a rock!'

'Under those circumstances, I'm rather glad I missed it,' I returned.

'Incredible!' ejaculated the lover. 'Oh, did you ever see a face at once so lovely and so perfect? Were you blind to those brilliant eyes with

the long drooping lashes and the delicately pencilled brows; to the pouting little mouth with the cherry lips and the clusters of pearls within; to the delicate tint of her complexion, with the hue of the rose upon her cheek? Did you fail to observe the graceful contour of her lissom form? the artistic beauty of her tiny hands and feet? Were you not entranced by the tones of her musical——'

'Excuse me, my dear fellow,' I interrupted ruthlessly; 'but we shall be late for dinner at this rate, and whatever *your* case may be, the sight of Señora Maria won't replace my appetite. Besides, when you grow a little cooler, I think you will allow that our prospects are hardly sufficiently settled to justify raptures.'

'The most prosaic person upon earth!' ejaculated my comrade indignantly. 'Of all the cold-blooded, hard-hearted, practical fellows I ever came near——'

The sound of the dinner-bell cut short his reproaches, and sent him into a fever of bustle and excitement for fear he should be too late.

Dinner passed off agreeably. My comrade had manœuvred with such success as to place himself by his charmer's side, and laid siege to her heart

both with tongue and eye with characteristic fervour. Looking round at intervals in the pauses of my talk with the old Don and his son, I could not help observing that my friend seemed making rapid progress in his glowing suit. The pleasant smiles, the tender glances, and the complacent air with which the lady received his addresses, were omens of good fortune that placed the enthusiastic lover upon the topmost pinnacle of delight.

When we were alone, I thought myself in duty bound to remonstrate with my impetuous friend upon the rash vehemence with which he seemed bent upon plunging into a passion that might seriously injure his future prospects.

'Remember, my dear L.,' I observed gravely, 'that if you follow up this matter as you seem disposed, you must bid adieu to all hopes of a glorious career. You must abandon the cause we have come to support; you must hang your pistols upon the wall, and let your sword rest in the scabbard. Family ties are ill suited to the man who jeopardises the happiness of others, in addition to risking his own life.'

The prudent reader will easily imagine for himself the further arguments of which I made use; but when did the voice of reason succeed in over-

ruling the dictates of fervid passion? The only result that I achieved was to irritate an over-excited fancy to a pitch that almost brought about a breach of our long-standing friendship.

'A cool head is always the sign of a cold heart,' remarked my comrade with a sneer, as he flung at last angrily out of the room.

The fineness of the evening induced me to cross the Rio Grande to Matamoras, which lies on the opposite side of the river to Brownsville, to look up an old acquaintance, Captain E., of the Imperial Legion.

Upon approaching the river forming the boundary of Mexico, the ancient town of Matamoras lay before me. My eye rested with admiration and delight upon the beautiful landscape. The towers of the Cathedral rose proudly into the sky, while close by their side the ruins of the old government castle glowed in the evening sun, calling to mind the byegone splendour of the Spanish rule. The Conquistadores were famous builders, and the traces of their massive strongholds are scattered broadcast over the land. Time, anarchy, and ceaseless civil warfare have overthrown many a tower and levelled many a battlement that would otherwise have been standing yet, but these ruins

still remain as tokens of their pristine formidable strength, and will continue to endure for centuries.

I had little difficulty in discovering Captain E.'s quarters. The Mexican landlord of the house directed me upstairs, and a hearty welcome greeted my unexpected arrival. As was but natural, our conversation at first consisted of little more than mutual detail of our various fortunes since our last meeting. When this, however, came to an end, I informed my friend of the strong desire my comrade and I had to enter the Mexican service, with a view to furnish such help as was in our power towards sustaining the Imperial cause. Captain E. highly approved our determination, and promised to use his influence with the general commanding the district towards procuring us positions suitable to the rank we had previously held, and the experience we had acquired, in the service of the United States. It was late before we separated. Captain E. accompanied me to the river, and we parted with the promise of speedy meeting.

I pass over several days, during which nothing of moment occurred, save that I was rendered seriously uneasy by the evident increase of what I could not but regard as my comrade's unfortunate infatuation for Señora Z. His inti-

macy with all members of the family grew daily, and he was clearly an almost equal favourite with all. Although I could hardly feel surprised at this tribute to his amiability, I regretted it profoundly. Entertaining myself a strong personal attachment towards him, I foresaw that the time was not far distant when he would find himself called upon to choose between the new tie and the old one, and my heart misgave me wofully lest the former should prove the stronger. In fact, his whole thoughts already seemed absorbed by the object of his love. Upon every occasion that afforded the slightest pretext, he was always by her side. Whenever I broached the subject of our future prospects, and expressed the hope that we might soon be able to join the Legion, he gave evasive answers, displayed but slight interest in the topic, and evidently wished to be spared discussing an unwelcome possibility. The only hope I still felt was that, after Don Juan's departure, I might regain my old influence over his mind.

When we arrived at Brownsville, a project had been some weeks afloat among the officers of the Legion to undertake an excursion, a sort of pic-nic, to the abbey of Santa Rosalia, the chief object of interest to sight-seers in the State of

Tamaulipas. A day in the beginning of March was ultimately fixed upon, when the monks were to celebrate a church festival with great pomp. Having been introduced to the officers by Captain E., I had received an invitation, and drove to the appointed spot in company with my friend.

Santa Rosalia is one of the most striking monuments of Mexican architecture. It is situated in an extensive wood, in one of the finest districts of the state. The originally stringent rules of the order have been gradually relaxed, and when Captain E. and I entered the court-yard, we saw many black-robed figures, who appeared in no way to shun contact with the laity.

Strange and unaccustomed are the reflections that force themselves upon the mind of the man of action when he visits the abiding-places of those who have retired from the trials and temptations, the pleasures and enjoyments, of the outer world. How singularly different are their lives to his! A feeling of respect for their self-denial, and of reverence for their sacred calling, is coloured with an involuntary tinge of pity for their dull seclusion, and contempt for the poorness of spirit that so early gave up the fight. Yet he is conscious of an uneasy doubt whether truer felicity is to be found

in these uneventful existences or in his own more agitated and stormy career.

'You must lead a happy life, my father,' I said to the monk who conducted our party round the building.

'As happy as man may lead anywhere, my son,' replied the monk, 'when he is able to feel conscious of peace of mind.'

'A great mistake,' whispered Captain E. in my ear. 'No man can feel happy when he cannot love.'

After attending service, our party re-entered the carriages, and drove into the wood, to seek a suitable spot for dinner. This being discovered, hampers were unpacked, the provisions brought to light and displayed in due order, and the afternoon passed away in the manner common to jolly and agreeable pic-nics in every quarter of the globe.

It was late in the evening before we reached Matamoras. I allowed myself to be seduced into several rubbers of whist, which lasted so long that I was compelled to trespass on my friend E.'s hospitality for the night, and did not return to Brownsville till after breakfast next morning.

Upon reaching my hotel, I discovered to my intense surprise that my comrade was nowhere to

be found. In reply to my anxious enquiries, I learnt that he had left the previous afternoon in company with Don Juan Z. and his family, and the hotel clerk handed me the following note:—

'Hominum commenta delet dies.'

'Brownsville: March 6, 1866.

'Dearest Friend,—When you receive these lines, Providence will already have cast us many miles asunder. My heart feels relieved at having taken this decisive step, although I grieve to part from you so abruptly. But we cannot strive against Fate. It is wiser to put faith in her, and lay our fortunes trustingly in her hand. I comfort myself with the consciousness that the future will justify my course. Farewell, dear Max! My eyes fill with tears when I reflect that we may meet no more. Remain ever what you are now; preserve a kindly remembrance of our friendship; and that God may protect and always be with you, is the prayer of

'EUGENE.'

It was a hard blow, and I am not ashamed to say that at first I staggered under the shock. Strongly as I knew Eugene's passion for the handsome Mexican to have taken possession of his

mind, I had still hoped that time and reflection would effect his cure. But now the die was cast, and I had lost my friend. Whether he had succeeded in persuading the lady's family to accept his suit, or whether he had only managed to gain a footing in Señora Maria's heart, and was trusting to perseverance and persuasion to obtain the consent of her relatives, I was entirely at a loss to divine. Nor, to say truth, did I care very greatly to learn. All I did know—all, in that first unspeakable grief of separation, that I was capable of feeling—was the one hard, palpable, and unquestionable fact: I had lost my friend, and the consciousness was very bitter.

The hotel clerk told me further that, before his departure, Lieutenant von L. had deposited in his hands for my use a sum of fifty dollars, which were at my immediate disposal. Touched as I was at this proof of Eugene's delicacy and affection, I could not help feeling greatly surprised. Convinced, from the intimacy that had prevailed between us, that I was fully acquainted with the extent of my friend's resources, I felt sure some secret source of supply was open to him, of which I had not been previously aware. This naturally

strengthened my belief that he had come to an understanding with Don Juan Z.

I lost no time in communicating what had happened to my friend Captain E. Though sympathising with my disappointment, he could not be expected to feel as keenly upon the subject as I did, and he suggested several grounds for consolation.

'Perhaps, after all, your comrade has acted wisely,' he concluded. 'Lovers make bad soldiers. If I had my way, every married man should leave the service. The best plan now will be to push on your own affair as urgently as possible. Active service will brush all the cobwebs out of your mind.'

The heart of man is too small to shut up within its own narrow chambers either all the joy or all the grief by which it is assailed. Most people seek a congenial spirit, in whom they can confide.

Almost simultaneously with the loss of Eugene, I made the acquaintance of a young French violinist, M. Roger, who was giving concerts in Brownsville with great success. His skill in the management of an instrument which above all others, perhaps, best expresses the passionate emotions of the human heart, first attracted me to-

wards him, and we soon became friends. We passed much time pleasantly together, making excursions in the neighbourhood, and finding enjoyment in the calm contemplation of Nature. Through my influence with the officers of the Legion, I succeeded in obtaining the permission of the general commanding the district for M. Roger to give concerts at Matamoras, which proved very advantageous to him.

At last I received the welcome summons from Captain E. I packed my traps together, took the steamer for Bagdad, and reported myself to the commandant of that town. From him I received orders to join the Engineer department.

Once more, therefore, I was again embarked in the familiar soldier's life I loved so well.

CHAPTER III.

A BRUSH WITH FILIBUSTERS.

CHAPTER III.

THE INTENTION of fortifying Matamoras* had long been entertained at head-quarters, and the plan was now about to be carried out. My acquaintance with Count von B., then Chief Engineer in the department of the Rio Grande, gave me early intimation of the fact, and induced me to offer my services to the Commandant of Matamoras. In a

* Matamoras was built by the Spaniards in the Moorish style, and is bordered by the Rio Grande upon the United States side. Its streets are open and regular, but impassable in bad weather. The number of inhabitants is between 6,000 and 7,000. The fortifications, constructed in the modern fashion, do not limit the extension of the town. The cathedral, the government-house, and a roomy theatre, are the only public buildings worthy mention. The girdle of works constructed round the town measures about 20,000 feet. Fort Imperator and Fort Imperatrice, on the banks of the Rio Grande, command the river on the north; and the guns of San Fernando, a fort erected by the French, would play upon an enemy advancing from the north-east. Matamoras is situated in the State of Tamaulipas, in the midst of a level country.

few days I obtained a favourable reply, and repaired to my new post.

The works were erected by men of the Imperial army, who received extra pay for their labour. They were carried on without interruption from the Juarists, who lay in the neighbourhood under Escobedo. The working parties were protected on the river side from surprise by the guns of the Imperial river gunboat 'San Antonio.'

I was standing one fine morning in March upon the platform of a signal-tower, and looking down upon the houses in the town. They were veiled at first by a slight mist, soon chased away by the cheerful beams of the sun, breaking out from behind the thickly-clothed trees towards the east, and gilding with its rays the copper-tipped domes of the cathedral towers. A lovely morning and a pleasant scene, well calculated, with the sight of the verdant foliage and the perfume of the scented flowers, to awaken feelings of joy and gratitude within the mind. For the sensitive spirit cannot fail to perceive that in every corner and in every climate of the earth, upon the ice-bound coasts of the frozen North as in the burning latitudes of tropical lands, Almighty wisdom has built a temple of natural materials, 'a house not made

with hands,' into which all men can enter and worship their Creator's name.

I was aroused from my reflections by the drums of a detachment entering the town along the Bagdad road. Their white uniforms and red fezzes at once showed them to be Egyptians, and towards evening several of their number joined the camp upon the banks of the Rio Grande.

I had set up my tent upon the bank of the river, not far from the 'San Antonio.' It was a healthier and more agreeable spot than in the town, and I was nearer the working parties. As frequently happened, the badly-disciplined negro troops of the United States fired at our outposts across the river. Desirous of avoiding quarrel, we never took any notice of Sambo's bad manners, but our hot-blooded Egyptian allies were not so tolerant. They jumped to their feet, and blazed away in retaliation until ordered to desist.

The captain of the 'San Antonio' and I had become very good friends: it was my practice to pass a few hours on board almost daily. Traversing the wood this evening upon my usual visit, and when only a few paces distant from the bank, my attention was caught by voices among the bushes on my left.

'Take my advice, Cap., an' keep your eyes skinned—that's all,' was uttered in a strong Yankee accent. 'Them Imperials is smart chaps, some on 'em. The Foreign Legion 'uld wipe out your black cattle, afore you can cry Jeehoshaphat.'

''Tis the bouldness of the idee plazes me,' chimed in an Irish voice. 'We'll do without the naygurs, an' God d—— the Imperials, say I.'

'With all my heart!' ejaculated another speaker. 'I take it the job must be fixed in this wise. We're to keep hid here close by the bank among the trees, an' after twelve pounce down upon the consarn. Them as is ugly must be rubbed out; them as listens to reason shall be sent about their business. We take the boat, carry her down river afore dawn, hand her over to the Liberals, and pocket the shiners. That's my proposal. Them as likes it say "Ay!" an' chuck up their fists.'

'Ay! Ay! Ay!' cried a dozen suppressed voices, in hearty approval of the scheme.

Cautiously parting the branches, I saw some fifteen or sixteen desperadoes, armed to the teeth, lying on the sward.

'There's only one pint more as puzzles me,' continued the previous speaker. 'We've got to pass the guard without their givin' the alarm.'

. The answer to this objection was whispered in so low a tone that I failed to catch it. But I had heard enough, and hurried on at once to warn my friend of the coming danger.

The captain quietly ordered his men under arms, and made every needful preparation to give the filibusters a warm reception. At his request, I stayed on board the gunboat.

Midnight had sounded some time from the churches of Matamoras, and no signs of the assailants appeared. We almost feared they might have somehow got wind of our readiness to receive them, and had thought it advisable to stop away. The captain and I were upon the poop, and, the night being cool, were just about to withdraw to the cabin, when I thought I saw a dark speck moving rapidly along the river some distance ahead. We watched the suspicious object, until it swelled into a large boat filled with men, that came rapidly alongside.

The captain hailed, and warned the intruders to keep off, but the only reply he received was a pistol-shot and the simultaneous scramble of the party over the 'San Antonio's' bulwarks.

"Down with the d——d Imperials!' 'Quarter

to all who throw down their arms!' 'Death to all who resist!'

With these cries the filibusters rushed aft and forward, and engaged our crew. The Imperialists fought gallantly, and held their own. In the *mêlée* that ensued I lost my sword, and was obliged to make use of my revolver. One fellow I dropped after he had cut down a sailor and was pressing the captain hard. But the whole affair hardly lasted over a couple of minutes. The guard came rushing on from Santa Cruz, throwing up fireballs as they ran, which threw a glare over the scene. The moment the filibusters heard the shouts of the reinforcement, those who remained jumped into the river, and tried to save themselves by swimming to the opposite shore.

Upon examination, we found five of the attacking party were killed and two badly wounded, although their leader had escaped. Our loss was one man killed and a few slightly hurt.

Next day the guards were doubled, and a strict passport system introduced upon the frontier.

CHAPTER IV.

ATTACK UPON BAGDAD.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FORTIFICATIONS of Matamoras were soon completed, and I returned to Bagdad.

Some days afterwards Major K. rode out with a small body of cavalry to reconnoitre the vicinity, patrols having brought in word that a strong force of guerillas was prowling about the neighbourhood. It was rumoured that these fellows had come to an understanding with some of the negro regiments in the service of the United States to venture an attack upon the town. The Major found the reports of the scouts well founded, and ordered his men to keep well together during their return.

'The rascals will be upon us soon, Major,' remarked an officer, as the little party was re-entering Bagdad.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before wild and confused shouts re-echoed along the

road the reconnoitring party had just traversed, and penetrated to the spot where the companies of the Legion were that moment being drawn up. Shots were fired, and a strong body of guerillas, supported by negro troops, came rushing along the highway. The Major threw his men into column, and ordered them to prepare to receive cavalry. A flash was seen, and simultaneously with the report that followed, a bullet whizzed by the Major's ear, and struck a soldier standing behind him under the medal upon his breast. The man grasped convulsively at his heart, heaved a loud sigh, and sank together in a lifeless heap.

At sight of the American negroes the Major sent an express to the commandant of the French corvette 'Adonis,' lying at anchor in the harbour, desiring him to signal for assistance. Meantime, a small detachment was employed in barricading the windows of the custom-house—which also formed the guard-room—with beams, boards, and tables, and making ready to close the doors. The Major formed his men in the shape of an angle, the point being pushed forward some twenty paces, while the two sides rested upon the corners of the building. Our rear was protected by a high wall, which a small number of men was amply able

to defend, and in this position we awaited the foe.

The space before the custom-house extended about a hundred paces in our front, and the vanguard of the guerillas, followed by their negro allies, was not slow in making its appearance. Serious as our position was, many of the men burst into hearty laughter at the queer figures cut by the horsemen who now approached.

'Voyez les oiseaux de plomb!' cried a Frenchman, catching sight of this grotesque cavalry.

Brown swarthy figures were perched in unwieldy saddles, furnished with tremendous stirrups, upon gaunt and jaded cattle. Leather breeches and sandals, problematical shirts, and horse-cloths —through holes in which protruded lean sinewy arms—constituted a kind of ragged uniform. Long black hair fell matted about their shoulders, and was crowned by broad-brimmed felt wide-awakes. Their weapons were carbine, revolver, and sabre.

Irregular and disorderly masses of these fellows crowded from all sides into the Plaza, brandishing their arms, uttering loud shouts and confused cries. But they hesitated, and gave back a moment, when they saw the glittering line of rifle-barrels levelled full upon them, and perceived the

firm, unyielding attitude of our steady troops. Their fears, however, were overcome by their thirst for plunder and massacre, and they rushed in upon us with the cry of 'Vencer o morir por la república de Mejico!'

'Front rank, fire!' rang out the Major's sonorous voice, calm, cool, and self-possessed as on parade.

Mown down like corn by the sickle, the foremost lines of our assailants melted away before the well-aimed withering volley, men and horses strewing the ground in a confused and struggling heap. The cries of wounded men, and the shouts and curses of those yet untouched, in an instant filled the air.

Disengaging itself from the mass, the furious body of the assailants again surged onwards, firing irregularly, and with little effect. They were met by a second volley, if possible more searching than the first, and for a moment checked. But they were now wound up to fighting pitch. Knowing it was as dangerous to fly as to advance, their leaders urged them on a third time to the attack, and their overwhelming superior numbers burst down upon our little body like an avalanche.

Then followed a desperate hand-to-hand fight

with the bayonet. Over and over again we drove the assailants back; over and over again they came back to the charge. We dared not abandon our formation, for in its maintenance consisted our only hope of safety. The guerilla leaders saw this, and hurled their men upon us, lavishing scores of lives, in the hope of crushing us by sheer weight. But our Major's coolness was equal to his position. He ordered the apex of the angle slowly to fall back upon the door of the custom-house, every muzzle being directed towards the point of the column; aud the cross-fire thus created was more than the enemy had stomach to stand. The wings gradually followed their comrades, and as the last man crossed the threshold the door was rapidly slammed, and strongly barricaded with massive beams.

A roar of baffled rage and fury burst from the disappointed Mexicans. They rushed forward howling, and beat upon the doors with their butts like madmen; then, finding it resisted their utmost efforts, they jumped up at the lower windows, and fired into the house. Here, however, they could do little damage. Posted securely behind the heaped-up furniture, the tirailleurs of the Legion picked off numbers of their assailants

without losing a man. The chief sufferers were the American negroes, who had broken into and plundered a liquor store, and staggered up pot-valiant to meet their death.

Finding our shelter unassailable, the Mexicans brought up axes and heavy beams, to use as battering-rams, and it was not long before the doors began to quiver under repeated strokes. It is doubtful whether we could have held the post much longer if the captain of the French corvette, warned by the Major's messenger of our dangerous position, had not come manfully to our assistance. Depressing his mortars to bear upon the town, he fired shell into the dense masses of the enemy, and at the same time landed a strong body of marines to take them in flank.

The tables were now turned. The moment we perceived the altered state of affairs the doors of the custom-house were thrown open, and we sallied out in force to give our opponents another taste of the steel. But they did not await our attack. Speedy retreat was the word, and retreat was soon converted into panic-stricken and disorderly flight. The guerillas dispersed in all directions. Their negro allies drew off to the banks of the Rio

Grande, adding to their already heavy loss by the numbers shot and drowned in swimming the river. Our own loss in killed and wounded was anything but small, though not approaching in number that of the invaders.

CHAPTER V.

CAMARGO.

CHAPTER V.

At the beginning of May 1866 the commandant of the Legion received orders to furnish a sufficient force to serve, with other Mexican troops, as escort for a convoy of supplies and munitions of war from Matamoras to the metropolis.

The company to which I was attached was among those selected for the service, and I hailed with delight the prospect of at last seeing that famous capital, of which I had heard such varying reports. I should also, no doubt, obtain an audience of the Emperor, and gratify the long-felt wish of setting eyes upon a sovereign whose character I so greatly admired.

Dawn was already gilding the eastern horizon when the convoy set out. Rays of brilliant light touched the cupolas of the venerable cathedral, and shone upon the numerous towers and roofs of the still slumbering town. A fresh morning breeze

just crisped the shining surface of the Rio Grande, and bore upon its wings the clear sharp tones of the church clocks, which all struck five at nearly the same instant.

The expedition was commanded by the imperialist general Alvarez, a Mexican by birth, of whose military capability no doubt had hitherto been entertained.

The convoy was composed of heavily-packed waggons, and moved slowly forwards in a long continuous line. Impenetrable thickets of shrubs, as high as walls, lined both sides of the road, and cut off all sight of the surrounding country. For some time past the weather had been very dry; the road was covered inches thick with layers of dust, which, being stirred up by the hoofs of the draught-cattle, soon converted the atmosphere into visible grit. Men, horses, and vehicles lost their individuality in dress, caparison, and colour, and became different-sized moving heaps of the same grey indistinguishable hue.

By the time we reached the Rio Grande the scene was somewhat improved. The sun had now completely risen, and poured a flood of dazzling light upon the surface of the stream, making its greenish waters appear shot with silver. The

active life of the commencing day had begun upon both banks. Thin spiral columns of smoke wound into the air from the small craft anchored in the river, showing that their crews were looking after proper sustenance for the inner man.

The march continued until eleven o'clock through a more open country than at first. When the 'great heat' began to set in, halt was made in the shadow of the trees beside the road. Rations of coffee, bread, and dried beef were distributed to the men; and, after dinner, officers, soldiers, and mule-drivers disposed themselves comfortably to take siesta.

The scene was peculiar to a tropical land. I had taken shelter under the shade of a tree, and could not help admiring the perfect calm and stillness of quiet slumber that settled down upon the entire landscape. The fierce glow of the sun caused the strongest leaves to droop; the smallest twigs of the tiniest bushes hung their fainting heads; man was compelled to obey the natural law. Some few salamanders of fellows were busied around the cooking-kettles, but the majority lay prone, stretched out at full length, with their knapsacks as pillows, snoring beneath the trees. The draught-cattle had received their feeds of maize, and rested,

lazily chewing the cud, with half-shut sleepy eyes, and content visible upon their honest placid faces.

We reached a small rancho, called El Cabota, fairly tired out, at eight in the evening. The sun was rapidly setting, and his rays streamed like a golden glory over the plain we had selected for our bivouac. Evening set in suddenly—clear, cool, and filled with perfumed air, heavy with the scent of flowers; the firmament spread its dark blue dome above us, spangled with innumerable stars. When supper was over, men and beasts betook themselves to repose. The sentinels were doubled, as the unreliability of the Mexicans required that we should take every precaution. Captain E. and I had selected the ground beneath a spreading tree as our place of repose, and this would have been an excellent idea, if some fowls, roosting in the branches, had not come to the same decision earlier than we. The annoyance they caused was so great that we were forced to seek another resting-place. Our old enemies the mosquitoes buzzed round us in swarms, and did their best to 'murder sleep,' but our excessive fatigue set even the pungent bites of these tormentors at defiance.

Three days after we had passed El Cabota, we were alarmed by the falling back of our advanced

guard, with the report that they had sighted the enemy's outposts at two hours' march ahead. Scouts we sent out brought back intelligence that General Escobedo, assisted by the United States, had thrown himself by forced marches in our front. His force consisted of 3,000 men and a six-pounder battery, and he was determined to attack the convoy. Halt was immediately called, and as the waggons came up in succession, they were drawn up in square, with the teams in the centre; the object, of course, being to form an available point of defence. Orders were issued that the men should pass the night under arms, nocturnal surprise being a favourite manœuvre with Mexican generals.

A council of war was at once held, under the presidency of General Alvarez. Even at this early stage of the affair, the imperialist commander betrayed an amount of irresolution and flurry that augured badly for success. After much discussion it was finally resolved to attack the enemy's position next morning, endeavouring to break his centre, and so to penetrate to Camargo. The night passed without disturbance.

The town of Camargo lay about half an hour's march in our front. The cathedral clock struck

seven, and the rising wind carried the clear sharp tones of the bell far over the plain, sounding many a gallant fellow's knell. The two guns, constructed to fire shrapnel, which formed our sole artillery, were brought into position. Mexican cavalry and infantry formed our right wing; the two companies of the Legion were posted on the left. In order to feel the enemy, our guns were fired three times in different directions. The last projectiles must have been effective, for the enemy at once showed himself in line, and rapidly returned our fire, without however doing us the slightest damage. His guns were pointed too high; the shot flew over our heads, and crashed among the trees a considerable distance in our rear.

The artillery duel on both sides ceased for a time. We pushed forward our skirmishers, but the overpowering weight of the enemy's fire obliged us to recall them, with the view of trying an attack *en masse*. While engaged in this manœuvre, either treachery or cowardice was at work on the right wing. The Mexicans stationed in that quarter took to flight, part of their number going over to the enemy with the cry 'Evviva la República de Mejico!' Furious as we were at the sight, the desertion of our allies only caused

us to redouble our efforts. The vehemence of our charge, and the accuracy of our fire, checked the advance of the hostile column, and even made it fall back some distance.

A slight pause ensued, employed by Escobedo in sending us a flag of truce with a summons to surrender. The commandant of our small force returned a contemptuous refusal, and was unfortunately carried away by his hasty temper to commit an altogether inexcusable act. Calling out, 'We do not treat with robbers!' he shot the truce-flag bearer dead.

This imprudent action gave the signal for an immediate renewal of the fight. With wild cries, curses, and shouts of 'Caracho Austriaco! matemos á los estranjeros!' the main body of the Mexicans swept down upon us like a raging torrent. Although we met their first onset with a searching volley that cut terrible gaps in their ranks, yet reserves were constantly hurried up to step into the places of the fallen. Still, we managed for a time to hold our own with less loss than the enemy.

It was evident, however, that this could not last. Forming the men up into a solid concentrated mass, the word was given, and the Legion rushed with all the impetus it could command upon the

enemy, in the hope of breaking his centre. The attack was so sudden and so vehement that for more than one hour the vastly superior hostile force was kept at bay. We began to entertain hopes of success, and getting through to Camargo, when a Mexican column was launched against our flank, and we were thus placed between two fires.

Under these circumstances, our commander, who had neither lost coolness nor presence of mind, gave the word to take close order and fall back upon the square of waggons. In executing this manœuvre, our men unfortunately got into disorder. The enemy at once perceived our confusion, and was no longer to be restrained. Dashing in from all sides with shouts and execrations upon our wavering line, he broke up what little formation remained, and threw us into hopeless chaos.

A terrible massacre commenced. No quarter was given; I doubt indeed whether any was even asked, for our poor fellows fought like lions, died where they stood, and only succumbed when literally borne down by weight and blows. The most abominable cruelties were exercised upon the helpless and the wounded.

Sabre and revolver in my right and left, I had already rid myself of a couple of Mexicans who

pressed me closely, and in so doing had received a slight wound in the foot. To extricate myself from the *mêlée*, I thought it advisable to creep under the waggons of the convoy. From this comparatively secure position, I was a horror-stricken and helpless spectator of the brutalities that ensued.

Heaps of corpses, many headless, others atrociously mutilated, strewed the ground. The sky was perfectly cloudless, and the bright noonday sun sent down its glowing beams upon that dreadful field. The groans and lamentations of the dying, mingled with the cries of the wounded for water, blended with the turmoil of the fight. Most of the officers had fallen, and among them our surgeon, a talented man, well acquainted with his profession, who was in the act of binding up a wounded soldier's hurts when the Mexicans broke our line. Unacquainted with Spanish, he tried to explain by gestures that he was a non-combatant. No matter; the barbarians shot him down. After the engagement, his body was found with five shot-wounds through the head. The few soldiers who remained saw themselves forced to try to save their lives by casting away their muskets, with the cry of 'Evviva la República de Mejico!'

Other officers had by this time joined me underneath the waggons. Among the number was my friend Captain E., with a gaping gash in the head. Luckily I had filled my water-flask before the engagement, and was able to give him some assistance. I was occupied in washing the coagulated blood from my friend's wound, when a thick cloud of dust suddenly arose just in front of our place of refuge. The flash and report of revolvers dispelled the dust, and showed me Lieutenant P., my comrade, hotly engaged with three of the enemy. It was but the work of a moment to swing myself across a waggon and rush to his assistance.

My sudden arrival for a moment stopped the combat. Singling out the most active of the Mexicans, I dealt him a blow with my heavy cavalry sabre that beat down his guard, and stretched him bleeding on the ground; while my comrade's revolver freed him from the second. I was raising my arm to cleave the skull of the third rascal, when he threw forward his firelock and sent his bayonet deep into the side of my neck. I fell senseless.

When I recovered consciousness, I found myself again lying underneath the waggons, surrounded by sympathising friends. I learnt afterwards that

Lieutenant P. had shot down the fellow who gave me my wound, and with the assistance of a private belonging to the Legion, had dragged me into security. My neck throbbed fearfully, and soon became so much swollen that I could scarcely speak.

The engagement had now ceased all over the field. The passionate fury of our enemies began to cool, and we no longer stood in danger of indiscriminate slaughter. The Mexicans dragged us out of our hiding-place, and plundered us mercilessly; few having any article of clothing left save their drawers. Numbers of our wounded died upon the field, or in the carts conveying them to Camargo, for want of medical aid. The unwounded—of whom there were very few—were sent off under escort to prison at Reynosa. The groans and moaning of the badly hurt, packed upon straw in miserable country carts, wholly unfitted for the purpose, were truly heartrending. The only answer to their piteous entreaties for a drop of water to still their burning thirst was a hearty curse and a blow from the muskets of the guard.

Our defeat was crushing and complete. Resistance had cost us immeasurable sacrifices, and

words are insufficient to convey the full horror of all that had taken place. Deprived of the helping hand of compassion, and far distant from his native country, many a brave German soldier found his grave at Camargo that day in a foreign soil.

All considerations of civilisation and decency—even the respect due to misfortune—were set aside by the barbarous enemy. Parched and fainting, without the slightest protection from the burning sun, the long sad procession of the wounded arrived in Camargo about four in the afternoon. Numbers of spectators had collected before a chapel upon the market-place, which was to serve as our prison. The sight presented by this desecrated fane, despoiled of all its ecclesiastical ornaments, with the long rows of writhing and whimpering wounded, all manly feeling of dignity and self-respect crushed out of the majority of their number by the agony of their hurts, clamouring for water, praying for food, entreating medical help, or shrieking to be put out of their pain, made up a picture of human misery and despair the like of which I trust never to see again. The only bright spot upon that gloomy canvas was due to the compassion of those gentle souls to whom misfortune never appeals in

vain. A few tender-hearted Mexican women prevailed upon the guard to let them enter the chapel and bind up the aching wounds of the most dangerously hurt.

The first night of our imprisonment was terrible. The chapel was small, and every opening through which air could enter tightly closed. Since early morning neither bit nor sup had passed our lips. Heat, want of ventilation, and the exhalations from so large a number of human beings crowded together in a confined space, combined with hunger and thirst to drive us nearly frantic. Added to these physical sufferings were the not less painful tortures of the mind. The shame and disgrace of defeat by an enemy we despised, sorrow for the loss of so many gallant comrades, indignation at the barbarous treatment of our cruel foe—all contributed their several shares to swell the sum of our misery. Amidst these various emotions, slowly lagged the night.

The first gray streak of dawn just penetrated through the chapel windows when a murmur of voices was heard without. The muskets of the guard clashed upon the pavement as the men grounded arms. The doors were flung open, and several Mexican women entered, accompanied by

an officer and a party of soldiers. ' At a sign from their superior, the men rushed to the windows and dashed out panes and framework with their butts. Rations were then for the first time distributed among the prisoners; and the women recommenced their charitable labours of the previous night. In the course of the day these good Samaritans supplied the badly wounded with mattresses of straw, shirts, and other necessary comforts. Owing, however, to the total want of medical aid, many a poor fellow was released by death from the hard lot of protracted captivity.

It was distressing to learn—as we did subsequently—that during the engagement a strong detachment of French troops had occupied the town of Mier, on the Rio de San Juan, a place some eight hours' march distant from the field, without making any attempt to come to our support. As soon as they heard of our defeat, these chivalrous allies plundered the town, and returned to Mexico.

The sad news of the capture of the convoy had hardly reached Matamoras before a local banking-house sent off a special courier with clothes and financial assistance to the officers of its acquaintance. The man also brought intelligence that our

defeat had compelled General Mejia to evacuate Matamoras, and retreat on board the French steamer 'Tampico,' at Bagdad. The banker's offer was thankfully accepted by all, and bills were drawn upon the corps at Puebla for 900 piastres. I believe, however, that these were afterwards dishonoured by the government upon presentation.

Camargo, the scene of the above disaster, is situated upon a plain bordered by hills near the Rio de San Juan, and is bounded on the north by the gentle undulations of the Sierra Madre. The fields in the vicinity are enclosed by hedges of aloe and blooming cactus, out of which oleander branches, with their pink and white blossoms, raise their quivering heads. The town is built in the Moorish style, and numbers about 3,000 inhabitants. The majority of these people are poor, notwithstanding they dwell in a land where the fertility, luxuriance, and diversity of the vegetation afford the primary conditions for the well-being of the labouring classes. The heights in the neighbourhood of Camargo are crowned with deserted convents and monasteries, surmounted with ancient brickwork, from whose high towers and desolate windows the spirits of a buried past look out upon modern anarchy, civil war, rapine, and discord.

CHAPTER VI.

AN OLD FRIEND.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NAME OF CAMARGO possesses a twofold interest in the reminiscences it recalls to my memory. Coupled with the recollection of our terrible defeat, it is connected with the remembrance of Don Juan Z. and the fortunes of my friend and comrade, Lieutenant von L.

All enquiries I made after Don Juan at first proved fruitless, until I heard one day accidentally, from a Mexican, where he was to be found. The old gentleman was the owner of a largish plantation, called Flora Bella, between Camargo and Mier, and had gone to France with his family at the outbreak of the war. This was all the information I obtained in return for the few reals I invested in its purchase. My only hope was that I might, in some way or other, chance to come across my friend in the course of our expedition.

My imprisonment at Camargo was materially

lightened by the kindness of an officer upon Escobedo's staff. Colonel V., the chief engineer, happened one day to see some sketches I had taken of the country through which we had passed, and asked if I would have any objection to make him similar drawings of the vicinity of Camargo. Rejoiced at any means of breaking the tedium and monotony of this inactive life, I willingly agreed. A species of intimacy thus arose between us, which procured me many an indulgence denied to my fellows.

Colonel V. one evening invited me to accompany him next day upon a visit he was about to pay to General Diaz, an old friend and comrade, stationed at Mier, distant some eight leagues. Such an opportunity of a pleasure-trip was not, under any circumstances, to be despised; but I was the more delighted with the offer for the chance I fancied it might afford me of hearing some intelligence about Eugene.

The funds furnished by the above-mentioned Matamoras banker had enabled me to procure a respectable civilian dress, which did me good service upon the present occasion.

The beams of the early sun were refracted from the white-painted houses of Camargo as we started

upon our journey. It had rained heavily the previous night, and the swollen waters of the Rio de San Juan were dangerous to cross upon the flat-bottomed boat that plied at the ferry. The boatmen, in fact, at first refused to take us over; and it was only through Colonel V.'s persistence they were induced to comply. By great exertion the men ultimately conveyed us across the raging stream, and landed us in safety upon the opposite shore.

Towards eleven, at the commencement of the noonday heat, I was overcome by so violent an attack of fever that I could hardly keep my saddle. The Colonel observed my condition, and enquired of a passing Mexican whether there was a rancho in the neighbourhood where we could take shelter until the vehemence of the attack had subsided. The man replied that, with the exception of Don Juan Z.'s plantation, there was not a single dwelling on the road between Camargo and Mier. The familiar name naturally aroused my attention, producing such an effect upon me that I almost forgot my indisposition.

Colonel V. desired the Mexican to show us the way to Flora Bella, promising him a sufficient reward. By many winding paths, leading hither

and thither through this uncultivated district, we reached a broad road, conducting us straight to Don Juan's property. In about half an hour we arrived at an open space, where we beheld, at a little distance in front of us, a stately dwelling-house with other buildings, surrounded by a fence, and behind it an extensive level covered with coffee plants, cotton shrubs, and other profitable crops. A tall negro admitted us into the grounds. A wide and well-kept road brought us to the house, where a servant in livery hurried out to take our horses, and another led us up the steps of the verandah into the reception room.

Few minutes passed before Don Juan Z. appeared. He instantly hailed the Colonel as an old acquaintance, embracing him, according to Mexican custom, and bade him heartily welcome. Turning to greet his friend's companion, the old gentleman fairly started with amazement when his eye fell upon me.

'A, qué gusto de ver á V.!' he exclaimed again and again, heartily pressing my hands and embracing me, with every appearance of high delight.

The warmth of my reception was no doubt partly due to my host's ideas of what politeness

and hospitality required; but I was too much affected at the moment to philosophise. After so many hardships and sufferings, it was inexpressibly soothing to encounter so much kindness in a hostile country, under the roof of a native of this treacherous land, where every man carries his life in his hand, and few can long feel themselves secure from the danger of poison or the dagger.

Shortly afterwards Don Fernando came in, and greeted me almost as heartily as his father had done. The Colonel and Don Juan speedily digressed into a discussion on Mexican politics, in which I took no share; finding which, my young friend invited me to come aad see the grounds.

My first question to Don Fernando, when we were alone, related to my comrade. Where was he? I enquired; was he well, happy, in good circumstances?

'So far as I am aware, he is both happy and well,' returned Don Fernando, with a significant smile.

'But where is he? how can I find him?'

'He resides at Mier,' was the laconic reply.

'What does he do there?' I demanded, in surprise. 'Speak, my friend, I implore you. Do not keep me in suspense.'

'Is it possible you cannot guess?' returned Don Fernando, with a smile. 'Why, he is married, my friend; married to my sister, Donna Maria.'

I cannot say that I was greatly surprised at the news, for the absence of the lady from the house had already induced me to suspect the cause. Still I was, of course, greatly interested, and drawing Don Fernando to a seat, I plied him with questions until I had learnt all that he had to tell.

The tinkle of a bell summoned us to return to the house. Breakfast was laid in a spacious handsomely appointed room, and we sat down with excellent appetites to the luxurious meal. Amidst cheerful and pleasant conversation the time sped rapidly away, and Don Juan's carriage had long been waiting to convey us to Mier before we rose from table. The Colonel preferring the saddle, rode along at our side.

During the journey the old Don repeated the main facts of my friend's connexion with his family, which I had already heard from his son; but with characteristic reticence, refrained from entering into detail. I, upon my part, had many questions to answer respecting our recent disaster at Camargo.

We reached Mier in the afternoon, and the

Colonel took leave of us, with the promise to look in upon Don L. in the evening. We drove on for some distance through nearly empty streets, until Don Juan drew my attention to a handsome residence on the left, with the words,

'Look, my friend! that ancient building yonder upon the height is the ancestral seat of my family.'

The mansion to which he pointed was a square, two-storied edifice, antique in style and construction, and surmounted with a large dome rising from the centre of the flat roof. The house was situated in the centre of extensive grounds, surrounded by a low, somewhat ruinous stone wall.

The carriage rolled through a pair of handsome iron gates, along an avenue overshadowed by lofty trees, which led to the foot of the verandah running round the house. I squeezed myself into the corner of the vehicle, so as not to be seen. Looking cautiously from the window as we drew near, I perceived Donna Maria, in the full bloom of her youth and beauty, hastening on to the verandah to meet her father. I let the old Don and his son alight first, and remained in the carriage. Before they reached the verandah steps, the doors of the house flew open, and my friend L. hurried towards his father-in-law.

The young couple were busily engaged in welcoming their relatives, when a third guest claimed their attention. Thunderstruck at my totally unexpected appearance, L. and Donna Maria fell back a step, and uttered a simultaneous cry of amazement. The next moment L. and I lay in each other's arms. When the first outburst of joy had subsided, L. said to me with a smile:—

'I believe you recollect my wife; still, in case you should have forgotten her, allow me the pleasure——'

Donna Maria came forward and placed her hand in mine.

'No friend of Eugene's can ever be a stranger to me,' she said pleasantly. 'Welcome, Señor Barone; our house is at your service, with all that it contains.'

I made a suitable reply to what linguists will recognise as a frequent Spanish compliment, adapted to the high-flown and exaggerated character of the language, but was speedily interrupted by Eugene.

'To dinner, my friends, to dinner!' he cried. 'You must stand in need of refreshment, and we can exchange the story of our adventures over our wine. Max, will you take in my wife?'

A merrier or more jovial party could hardly have been found than that which shortly afterwards collected round my friend L.'s hospitable board. My modesty was put to a severe test, for all were eager to hear the fullest possible account of my military career since the day of our previous separation. A man usually cuts a sorry figure when capital 'I' forms the chief personal pronoun in whatever he has to relate; but I did my best to keep the obnoxious monosyllable at its proper place in my narrative. Whatever my success in this particular, the story of my sufferings, at any rate, called forth the sympathy of the audience; for when I had concluded, and Don Fernando rose to drink my health, and express the warmest wishes for my future prosperity, I noticed that Donna Maria turned aside to wipe away a tear.

After dinner we took coffee in the verandah, sheltered by blinds from the glow of the afternoon sun. Nature seemed to have put on her most smiling aspect to celebrate the festival of our reunion. Not a cloud flecked the clear blue of the sky—clearer and brighter in that favoured land than we are ever used to behold in our own more temperate zone. Round about and over beds filled with gay and blooming flowers fluttered

innumerable gorgeous-hued butterflies, their wings brilliant with all the varied colours only found in tropical climes. From our seats upon the verandah we enjoyed an extensive view over the distant landscape.

Little change was visible in Donna Maria since I had seen her last. She still retained that indescribable charm of manner, combined with perfect simplicity and unaffectedness of demeanour, which had from the first attracted my notice. Her beauty was, if possible, even more striking than before. She thoroughly understood and appreciated the peculiar temperament of my friend, who adored her with all the enthusiasm of the most romantic tenderness. A more attached pair it would have been difficult to find.

We had passed an hour in cheerful conversation when a carriage rolled up to the verandah steps, and some Mexican ladies, friends of our charming hostess, joined the party. Eugene embraced the opportunity of their arrival to draw me away with him into a more private part of the grounds, and gave me an account of the manner in which he had won his bride.

Eugene's narrative concluded, my friend and I discussed the chances of releasing me from my

captivity. Although, with his wonted generosity, he was heartily desirous of aiding me with all the influence and resources at his command, it did not appear that anything else could be done for the present than quietly to await the turn of events.

Don Fernando's sudden arrival in search of us broke off the conversation. Returning to the house, we found that Colonel V. had joined the party, which soon arranged itself in little knots, variously engaged.

The lovely day was succeeded by quite as lovely and enchanting a night, falling over the country with the startling suddenness peculiar to the land. The flowers gave forth their choicest odours, as a kind of homage to the sinking sun; the birds twittered 'good night' to each other in their most endearing notes. The magical influence of the scene was felt by all beholders, and attuned their minds to reverent awe. Hearts long sundered, but now reunited, sent up their grateful thanks as incense to the throne of the Most High.

It was with a sense of luxurious comfort to which I had long been a stranger that I found myself that night in the elegant bedroom my friends' hospitable care had prepared for my

repose. Voluminous white-net mosquito curtains held out the prospect of keeping the blood-suckers from my couch. Perfumed water had been poured into a marble basin, wherein to bathe my weary feet. A servant assisted me to undress, and was assiduous in offering attentions, without which life would once have been thought abject misery, but which experience and hardships had taught me it was perfectly possible to do without and yet survive. Still, so inconsistent are they who most pride themselves upon philosophy, I received the valet's attendance with complacent delight.

Colonel V. was a guest at breakfast next morning. Kind friend and honourable gentleman as he was, his presence only reminded me that my return to captivity must no longer be delayed. With the finest tact and courtesy, he postponed our departure until the afternoon, so as to leave me in the enjoyment of my friends' society up to the latest possible period.

With some such feelings as, I suppose, the death-doomed criminal must experience as he watches the fatal hand move round the dial, I found that happy forenoon flee all too swiftly away. Colonel V. at last returned, and gave the word. With tears in my eyes I embraced Eugene, bade farewell

to his charming wife and her warm-hearted relations, sprang upon my horse, and galloped hastily after my companion through the entrance gate.

I have never seen the old Don's family mansion or its happy residents again, nor is it very probable that the lines of our lives will ever cross. Yet, whether fate or the course of events once more reunite us, or whether we fail to encounter each other again on this side of eternity, my heart will always cherish a fond remembrance of the kindly souls with whom Eugene von L. has cast in his earthly lot. Their virtues go far, in my mind, to redeem the vices and treachery of thousands of their countrymen.

The Colonel and I reached Camargo late in the evening. With a heavy heart I returned to my place of confinement, and tossed upon my miserable straw mattress many hours, wooing sleep in vain.

CHAPTER VII

UPON THE MARCH.

CHAPTER VII.

ONE fine summer's evening dinner was laid in Colonel V.'s garden, in a large marquee, planted upon a slight rise in the ground. Many places were unoccupied, for the master of the house was expecting every moment the arrival of General Escobedo and his staff from Matamoras. The quartermasters had come in the previous day to make arrangements for the reception and provisioning the troops.

I was leaning with folded arms against a tree, looking out gloomily in the direction of Mier, and thinking of the happy hours I had recently spent in the pleasant and united household of my friends. My gaze roved along the highroad, then was caught by the Rio de San Juan, from whose clear waters the golden rays of the setting sun were given back.

On a sudden the beat of drums resounded through the quiet evening air. A cloud of dust

arose upon the highway, through which were dimly seen the figures of men on horseback, the glitter of steel, and the dense masses of the approaching troops. Very shortly afterwards Escobedo and his officers made their appearance. Without much ceremony, the hungry guests sat down to table, and fell to with excellent appetites. Many a Spanish toast was drunk to the success of the Republican arms, in which, it may easily be supposed, I took no share.

Upon his entry into the State of Tamaulipas, Escobedo had issued the following proclamation. As a specimen of the spirit in which the Republican leaders carried on the war, this document—hitherto, I believe, unpublished in English—may not be devoid of interest:—

'PROCLAMATION.

'Matamoras: Julio 20, 1865.

'Be it hereby made known to you, the inhabitants of the State of Tamaulipas, that now you are freed from the arbitrary rule of the adventurers Louis Napoleon and Maximilian, you have to submit yourselves to the legitimate and paternal

government of the Republic. I call upon you, therefore, in the name of President Juarez, whose will has placed me at the head of his army, and who has given me explicit orders to save you, but to destroy those who persist in rebellion against the legitimate government, at once to lay down your arms. You are to understand that the term when the long-suffering of the rightful government will expire is fixed for Thursday next, and that up to that date addresses of loyalty and devotion must be handed in to me by the alcaldes of the respective towns and villages in the State of Tamaulipas.

'After the expiration of this period, all those who have failed to comply with the orders of this proclamation have nothing to expect but the utmost severity, and neither prayers nor supplications will avert the penalty.

'The pillage of those towns which have not submitted within the aforesaid term to the lawful government has been promised to my soldiers, who have all joyfully sworn to devote their lives to extirpating the enemies of the Republic from the land.

'(Signed) ESCOBEDO,
'General Commanding the
'Republican Army.'

We had now passed fully three months, amid manifold changes, in imprisonment at Camargo, and had little reason to expect any further alteration in our lot. The day after Escobedo's arrival, however, General Tapia, who had charge of the prisoners, unexpectedly issued orders for our departure to Linares. The sick and wounded were to be conveyed in carts, the convalescent to execute the march on foot.

My friend Colonel V. — indefatigable in his kindness—had got permission from the General that I should accompany the staff; a privilege, as it turned out, of incalculable value.

My fellow-prisoners had already set out, when I mounted and rode to the Colonel's quarters. We soon overtook the staff, and proceeded along the banks of the Rio de San Juan.

Among the suite of General Escobedo, I made the acquaintance of a Dane, Captain C., who in the course of time became my most intimate friend. Similarly to myself, he had formerly served in the army of the United States, and after being mustered out, had taken service in the Republican army of Mexico. Like all foreign officers among the Juarists, he had embraced their cause solely on account of the high pay they offered, and not

from any species of sympathy. I found in him a warm friend and a brave soldier, and though not highly educated, yet an excellent comrade.

The moon was high in the sky when we approached El Toro. Exhausted by the heat, and fatigued with the length of our march, we reached the summit of a chain of hills bordering the plain that forms the site of the town. Here Captain C. and I drew rein for a moment, to enjoy the lovely prospect that spread out before our view. The valley presented the aspect of a sparkling sea of diamonds, owing to the glitter of the moonbeams in the abundant dew. Light hazy shadows seemed to hover between earth and sky, like ghosts of the blossoms whose perfume rose around us. Real objects appeared to melt into mist, and incorporeal things to assume visible shape. Glow-worms carried their tiny lamps up and down the foliage of tropical plants, turning night into day within the circle of their radiance, and making darkness light. A faintly audible ringing, as of distant fairy bells, trembled through the night; and it was easy for a fanciful imagination to ascribe the humming, in reality arising from nocturnal insects, to the influence of supernatural visitants.

The numerous staff of General Tapia occupying

the few vacant beds to be discovered, Captain C. and I were forced to resort to the hospitality of a Mexican family. In their sitting-room, stretched upon a bundle of hides, we got such snatches of sleep as the fleas and the mosquitoes combined thought proper to allow.

By daybreak we were again upon the march. Our way lay now through wild ravines and mountain passes, enabling us to reach El Passo by the time the sun showed his face above the crest of the rocks. Here, upon the road to El Toro, was visible an air of prosperity, and consequently of security, such as I had rarely seen to so great an extent in any other part of Mexico.

From El Passo onwards the country is fairly cultivated. Following the course of the Rio de San Juan and skirting the Sierra Madre, we passed numerous ranchos at various points of the route. They were mostly abandoned by their inhabitants on account of the war, and fast falling into ruins; a fact the more deplorable, because even the smallest hamlet possesses a few fine buildings and churches, giving tokens of a more prosperous past.

Descending from the heights, we came upon a lake at a little distance from El Toro, and took

our siesta at a small rancho upon its bank. We reached the town at four in the afternoon. The inhabitants had received notice of our approach, and were prepared to welcome us. Captain C. and I were quartered together.

El Toro was destined to prove our residence for several weeks, as General Tapia had orders to remain there until Escobedo. should arrive with the main body upon his road to Monterey, which the French had evacuated by order of Marshal Bazaine.

The Rio de San Juan was daily frequented by bathing soldiers and Mexican washerwomen. At this spot I made the acquaintance of one of the latter class, who formed a rare exception, by her modest and reserved demeanour, to the free manners of the other Mexican girls. I usually met her going down to the river to fetch water at about four in the morning, when I was on my way to bathe. At first she barely acknowledged my greeting, but after a time we became better friends, which was the more easy of accomplishment because she lived in my neighbourhood. To cement the acquaintance, I sent her my linen to wash, and—as one means of killing time in the dreary intervals of tedious captivity—called to mind my

own former experiences of practical soldier's training sufficiently to show her how European washerwomen iron. My friend Captain C. often found me busily engaged at the ironing-board in the pretty Mexican's lodgings, and joked me upon my fancy accordingly.

Escobedo at last put in an appearance one afternoon, and the whole army—including General Tapia's corps—left El Toro the same evening for China. The weather was magnificent. Far in the background before us rose the bold lines of the Sierra Madre, standing out distinct and dark against the horizon, while from their topmost summits up to the zenith of the azure dome the sky glowed with pale pink cloudlets, from among which the stars peeped forth as between roses. The deeper the sun declined, the more brilliant became the play of colour. Chirping their evening song, the birds flew cheerily around. At times a gigantic condor, roused from his secure solitude by the approach of the troops and startled into flight, would rise with mighty flap of wing from his haunt among the rocks. Then we could see him sail majestically above the valleys, looking down into their misty depths, as the eye of the thinker calmly surveys the confused problems of

human life, which offer no riddles to his intelligent view.

It was pitch dark when we reached China, for though the stars still glittered in the sky, the moon had already set. Quarters of some sort were hurriedly procured, and we were only too glad to get to rest. The town was ruined by the disastrous war, and numbered but few inhabitants, nearly all of whom were steeped in poverty to the lips. The streets and the Plaza were empty, quiet, and grass-grown. The church had been a handsome edifice, but was fast falling into decay. Among the ruins of various monasteries and convents, we noticed large fragments of ancient brickwork, whose extreme antiquity was apparent even to the most unobservant eye.

For some time past my friend Captain C. had evidently been greatly troubled in mind, and his preoccupation had not been lessened by his having sedulously concealed its cause. He made no complaint, but his pale countenance, and the melancholy that veiled his usually frank and open glance, proclaimed that he was ill at ease, more eloquently than words. Though not by any means blind to his distress, I was too delicate to press for an explanation. My heart instinctively felt,

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what many pass an entire life without learning, viz. that we ought to love our friends as they wish to be loved, and ought to console them after the manner in which they choose to be consoled. To consult the feelings and the wishes of the companion you profess to esteem before your own is the touchstone of veritable friendship.

Very shortly after our arrival at China, it transpired that the prisoners, under the escort of General Tapia, were to pursue their march to Linares, according to the original programme, while Escobedo, and with him my friend and benefactor Colonel V., would conduct the main body of the troops to Monterey. This announcement had a material influence upon my fortunes and those of Captain C.

CHAPTER VIII.

ESCAPE.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN C. had long been tired of constantly roaming about the country with the Juarists, and ardently wished to return to the United States. It was equally impossible for me to continue in captivity, now that I had lost my protector and benefactor, Colonel V., for it was only too certain that the comforts and privileges his kindness had procured me would at once be withdrawn.

C. and I had therefore come to a mutual understanding to escape, and only awaited a favourable opportunity. My friend's position was in so far more awkward even than mine, that, as the Juarists had refused to let him resign his commission, he had no alternative but to desert. The fact that a short shrift and the nearest tree, or an immediate firing party, awaited detection and failure, in no degree shook our resolution.

I had acquainted C. with my opinion that our

best plan would be to make the attempt before leaving China. He agreed with me; but no opportunity had as yet arisen to settle either the time or details. To avoid the risk of being overheard by spies, we had arranged to meet at midnight in the chapel of Santa Lazara, to which we could get by using a kind of subterranean passage leading from an adjoining ruined house upon the Plaza. This romantic expedient was necessary to escape the notice of Escobedo's troops, a large number of whom were quartered in the town.

I went to bed early, but could not sleep. Hour after hour I heard the sentinels relieved, and lay counting the minutes. At last the bell of the cathedral told that the appointed time had arrived, and I stole quietly out of the room, in which General Tapia, with his aide-de-camp and other officers, were sleeping on camp beds.

The moon was shining, and not a breath of wind stirred the air. The light grey mist that usually prevails at night-time in Mexico enveloped the town, where the profoundest quiet prevailed.

Gliding along the street leading to the Plaza in the shadow of the houses, I managed to slip past the sentry unperceived, and entered the designated building. Descending some half-dozen steps, I

arrived at an archway, out of which a cold, damp, earthy atmosphere gushed towards me. Lighting a small lantern with which I had provided myself, I succeeded easily in finding the passage leading to the chapel.

Arriving here, I found that my friend had not yet reached the spot. I knew him, however, too well not to feel convinced that no cause save positive necessity would be allowed to interfere with his appointment, and sat down, therefore, upon the ruined altar to wait in patience.

The moon's pale light fell through an aperture the tooth of Time had gnawed in the dome. Around me reigned the silence of the tomb, broken only at intervals by the melancholy hoot of the owl. Twelve o'clock had long passed, without C.'s arrival. It now struck one. Almost simultaneously with the stroke I heard the echo of footsteps coming along the passage leading to the chapel. An indefinable feeling of precaution induced me to withdraw into a little doorway behind the altar, giving access to the ruined belfry. The footsteps approached, and I distinctly recognised the tread of a second person besides the first. Clearly, neither of the new comers could be C.

I drew off my boots, and, climbing noiselessly

and cautiously up the remains of the stone stairs, retreated still further into the shade. Next moment, two men enveloped in cloaks stepped out of the passage into the chapel. They sat down, whispering at first, but gradually becoming louder and less guarded in their talk. The subject of their conversation was certain arrangements about to be made by the party of Colonel Canales to debauch the troops under Escobedo, and induce them to declare Tamaulipas an independent state, with Canales as Dictator.

Unperceived and unsuspected, I remained in my hiding-place, but felt great apprehension lest C., ignorant of the spot at which we had arranged to meet being preoccupied, might still come to keep his appointment, and so get into collision with the men already in the chapel. No means, however, existed of warning him, and I was compelled to trust that Fortune would stand his friend.

A few minutes only had elapsed when I was thunderstruck to hear heavy footsteps, mingled with the rattle of spurs and the clank of sabres, come down the vaulted way. The conspirators in the chapel at the same instant took the alarm. Springing up, with the cry, 'They have betrayed us!—we are lost!' they hastened to hide

in what they thought the most likely part of the ruins to escape detection.

Though terribly alarmed at this unlooked-for incident, I was fortunately able to preserve my presence of mind. Climbing higher up the ruined staircase, until I reached the belfry platform, I tried to get upon an arch adjoining the tower, intending thence to reach the interior of the monastery connected with the chapel. To achieve this object, I had to execute a daring leap. I missed my footing in the jump, and fell from a height of some eighteen feet into an ancient cell of the monastery, but luckily without receiving material hurt. While lying here, I clearly heard the two conspirators drawn out of their hiding-place; and a few minutes afterwards a couple of pistol-shots announced that they had met their fate.

After this tragic incident, during which I had myself run considerable danger, I felt at first almost inclined to doubt C.'s good faith, but the remembrance of the many proofs of honest friendship I had received at his hands speedily stifled my suspicions. To make all perfectly secure, I remained where I had fallen for about a couple of hours, then cautiously sought to make

my way out of the labyrinth of ruins. I succeeded in scrambling on to a low wall, upon which a staircase had formerly been built, and thence on to the arched roof of a larger building. From that point it was easy to gain the garden wall, and, fastening a leathern strap I wore round the body to a hook, to let myself down to within a short distance from the ground.

Gliding silently along the streets, and keeping well in the shadow of the houses, I gained my quarters by an unfrequented and circuitous route. The moon had set, and the darkness proved my best friend. I laid myself down quietly and unnoticed, and slept till dawn.

At noon next day I encountered Captain C. From him I learnt that he had received orders at ten the previous evening to lead a reconnoitring party on the other side of the river, and had only just returned. Hurriedly and in feverish haste—for we had little opportunity to consult upon our future plans—I sketched the outline of my adventures during the night, and my friend agreed with me that, to avert suspicion, we had better abstain from meeting so long as we remained in China.

Man plans, but a higher Power directs the issue. Late in the afternoon, C. came to me again. He brought news that an order was upon the point of

being promulgated that all the prisoners should start at four next morning for Linares. This intelligence once more altogether changed our schemes, and raised us to the highest pitch of expectation. A more favourable opportunity than that now offered would be difficult to find, for we might well hope that, in the tumult and confusion of so early a movement, our absence might for a time escape notice. C. promised to have horses ready upon the bank of the Rio de San Juan, where we agreed to meet an hour before the time fixed for the march.

Punctually at three A.M. Captain C. and I, armed with sabre and revolver, galloped at full speed past the guard. The men challenged, but of course received no reply; their bullets luckily missed us in the darkness, though they sang angrily close over our heads. We soon struck off to the right of the high-road, and urged our horses on at a rapid pace. After riding about an hour, I fancied I heard the beat of hoofs and men's voices calling to each other some distance in the rear. I drew C.'s attention to the fact, and we halted, listening eagerly. Yes, we were pursued, though apparently by only a very small force. I urged C. to resume our flight, or at any rate to diverge from the road. But he would do neither. The gloomy melancholy to which I have above alluded seemed again to

overcome him, and an expression of hopeless despondency was visible in his features.

'It is useless,' he answered, sternly. 'If they pass us, they will rouse the country, and we shall speedily be intercepted on our route. We must slay them to a man, or die.'

He drew his sabre and cocked his revolver as he spoke. As a soldier, what answer could I make? He knew the country better than I did, and was well acquainted with the position of all the Juarist forces. I was aware that he possessed extraordinary courage and self-possession, and could not doubt that he had well weighed the chances of success. Still I could not but view the struggle into which we were about to enter as desperate in the extreme, undertaken probably against overwhelming odds.

We drew our horses across the road, and awaited the attack of the Juarists.

On they came—three men and an officer—cursing and shouting, spurring their horses to their utmost speed, as if trying to ride us down by main force. Taking cool and deliberate aim, C. shot the foremost with his revolver before the party could come up; and I was lucky enough to dispose of another. Infuriated at the loss of their comrades,

the remaining two of the party dashed at us with so much vigour that I should have infallibly been cut down if C. had not parried the blow, and himself engaged the Republican officer. The cavalry soldier who now attacked me was a powerful strong-built fellow, and no contemptible swordsman. I was too much occupied in keeping him at a distance to be able to use my revolver. The combat between C. and his antagonist was equally well sustained, but unfortunately of very short duration. A slashing stroke from C. broke down his adversary's guard, and inflicted a deep cut upon the shoulder. The Juarist fell wounded from his horse, but in falling buried his long knife to the haft in my poor friend's body. Both came to the ground together with a dull ominous thud.

Maddened at the sight, I rushed in upon my opponent and cut him down; then leaping from my horse, I lifted C.'s motionless body, and supported his head against my breast. The first glance at his features told me that hope was gone. He raised his dying eyes to mine with a look of gratitude; a feeble smile flitted round the corners of his mouth; he tried to speak, but the power of utterance was no longer at his command. Once more, and for the last time on earth, he pressed my

hand: then fell back with a heavy sigh, and his parting spirit mingled with the rustle of the morning breeze.

It is impossible to describe the poignant grief with which I realised my forlorn position, left thus utterly alone in a foreign land, holding in my arms the dead body of the only friend I possessed, who had just saved my life at the sacrifice of his own. I could scarcely refrain from murmuring against the decrees of Providence, which visited me with such severe misfortune. I could not utter a word, I could not shed a tear; I felt as if annihilated by the awful severity of this unexpected blow. No words are adequate to describe the full vehemence of the sorrow by which I was assailed. I must leave it to be imagined by the tender pity of sympathising hearts.

I rolled the body in a blanket, placed it by the wayside, and left it to its fate. The Juarist officer had meantime succumbed to the severity of his wound. None but dead were around me, and I hastened to quit the fatal spot. Mounting my horse with a heavy heart, I pursued my journey, ignorant whither Fate would lead me, and hardly caring whether or not I again fell into the hands of my foes. Night had fallen before I in any

degree recovered my self-possession, and slackened the pace of my foam-covered horse to a walk.

As darkness rendered it impossible to pursue my march, I determined to bivouac behind some bushes by the roadside. I tethered my horse to a tree, spread a blanket upon the ground, and lay down. The night passed under the varied influences of alarm and regret, such as only overcome a man at the great crises of his life. The soul then seems to free itself from earthly bonds, and to come into immediate contact with the spirit world.

At daybreak I pursued my journey after a sleepless night. To fill up the measure of my troubles, I was attacked towards noon by a fever, such as is very prevalent in the Mexican lowlands about that season of the year, and found myself frequently obliged in the course of the afternoon to dismount and lie down.

Evening had set in close and oppressive, when I fancied I heard the barking of dogs some distance on in front, and turned my tired horse in that direction. Profound darkness prevailed, relieved at intervals by flashes of far-away lightning, while hollow peals of thunder reverberated through the sky. Groping my way to the best of my ability through the obscurity, I was startled to perceive

before me the glare of a flickering fire, around which I could dimly distinguish moving figures. I dismounted, and led my horse cautiously towards the spot. As I approached, I saw that I had come upon the bivouac of a party of Juarist cavalry. Fortunately, my coming had not been observed, so that I was able to retreat behind a thick clump of shrubs which did me the twofold service of affording shelter against the approaching storm, and of furnishing a secure hiding-place from whence to watch the movements of the enemy.

The Juarists left their position at dawn, and took their way towards the north. I followed shortly afterwards in the same direction, but in so doing lost the track, and wandered about, unknowing whither I was going, for several days, in constant fear and danger of falling in with some of the roving hostile parties poor C. had told me were incessantly upon the move.

Fortune at last enabled me to strike a road, which I followed, in the belief that it must ultimately bring me into the neighbourhood of the habitations of men. The air was very mild and soft, and filled with a powerful odour of aromatic plants. Fields of maize and Indian corn alternated with thick clumps of brushwood and sweet chestnut

trees along either side of the highway. Plants difficult to rear in Europe, even under the protection of a greenhouse, here blossomed strong and hardily beneath the open sky.

My expectations had not led me astray. As I turned the corner of a wood, the houses of a small rancho lay close in front of me. Riding through the village, I halted before a small casa. Wretched as the place was, being one of the most squalid of its miserable class, I shall ever think of it with a thrill of gratitude, for it was here that I for the first time enjoyed a hearty meal of cheese, milk, and tortillas, after the hunger and privations of many days.

A new man after my welcome refreshment, I started with reinvigorated spirits upon my route. In addition to increase of bodily comfort, I felt mentally also more at ease, for I had now learnt the direction I must take to reach the part of the country I desired to attain.

The rays of the setting sun glittered upon the white walls and windows of the houses as I rode into the hamlet of Santa Cruz. A little brook trickles slowly through the place, almost hidden beneath the stems and leaves of the cama and other reed-like aquatic growths. Fields of waving

maize and extensive stretches of verdant prairie-grass, over the latter of which were scattered numerous herds of cattle, met the eye on every side.

A Mexican showed me the house of the Alcalde (mayor), which I entered with a courteous greeting. The village functionary readily assented to my request for supper and a night's lodging, yet not until he had subjected me to a series of questions as to whence I came and whither I was going, during which the old man sharply scrutinised my appearance from head to foot. He was apparently satisfied with my—I must admit, not over-true—answers, for when his interrogatory was ended, I was asked to take a seat. Few minutes elapsed before the house was filled with inquisitive Mexicans—the news of an *estranjero*'s arrival in this remote village having run from casa to casa like a fired train.

A young Mexican girl, whose face I had seen timidly peeping in at the door during my interview with the Alcalde, soon brought in supper, consisting, in the ordinary country fashion, of tortillas, coffee, and cheese. All the inmates of the house partook of the meal together, and I, for my part, did honour to the good cheer with excellent appetite. It was late in the night before I retired to the

little chamber near the top of the house assigned for my repose. The moon shone over the broad expanse of country upon which I gazed from the window, and the deepest quiet now prevailed, where a few hours previously I had looked upon the moving forms of happy animal life. The wild field-flowers covering the illimitable prairie-lands sent forth a pleasant perfume into the night.

Though I rose early next morning, I found the Alcalde was already afield. Enquiring as to the means of pursuing my journey to Matamoras, I learnt to my great annoyance that I was still at a considerable distance from that place; that the floods which usually occur at this period of the year in the lowlands between Santa Cruz and the town I desired to reach had already begun; and that it was not probable the water would fall sufficiently to allow of travel for five or six weeks. The Alcalde therefore advised me to return to Camargo or China.

Excellent reasons, well enough known to me, but of which the village functionary was necessarily altogether ignorant, prevented my adopting his advice. Liberal garrisons undoubtedly still held both the places he had named, and, if not stopped upon the road, I should have run directly

into the enemy's arms—for no possible benefit—upon my return. No choice remained but to wait until the floods subsided, and no safer abiding-place seemed likely to offer than that to which chance had conducted me.

I came to an arrangement with the Alcalde to look after his horses and cattle in return for board and lodging, and entered the same day upon my new career as a Mexican *ganadero*.

CHAPTER IX.

SEÑORA CLARA.

CHAPTER IX.

THE only approach to civilised society that fell to my lot in the two months I passed at the secluded agricultural village of Santa Cruz was the companionship of the Alcalde's daughter, Señora Clara.

This girl had lost her mother early, and had grown up almost entirely without education or female care; yet amidst all the easy morality of that passionate race, she presented the rare exception of the utmost innocence and purity. When I learnt to know her, she was just nineteen. Deep dark eyes, and masses of raven hair, falling in simple plaits over her shoulders and back; mild and regular features; tiny hands and feet, beautiful both in form and colour, and in no way disfigured by the domestic labour she regularly performed—these were the distinctive marks of the comely exterior that enclosed a singularly candid and lovely

soul. Grown up far from the snares and temptations of the seductive world, the poison of coquetry and destructive passion was utterly foreign to her mind.

The Alcalde, her father, was a type of the ordinary Mexican of his class—ignorant, sensual, and covetous; living only to hoard, to eat, and to drink.

During the time I passed at Santa Cruz, I grew quite familiar with Mexican manners and customs. Of a morning I assisted Señora Clara in milking, an art in which, under her tuition, I soon became a proficient; and of an evening I made myself useful in watering the cattle after they were driven home. Thus regularly thrown together, we were not long in making acquaintance. Washing-day came once a week, and in this department also my services were turned to account. I drew upon my memory for details of our European manner of wringing, blueing, mangling, and all other mysteries of the lavatory science, and did my best to explain their marvels to my wondering friend. Jokes, conversation, and stories enlivened many a pleasant hour.

In the course of time my clothing received so much damage from the performance of unwonted

work that I had all the appearance of a Mexican. Long uncut hair and untrimmed beard, with a darkly sunburnt face, rendered me almost undistinguishable from a native.

Time fled away with marvellous rapidity in the agreeable society of Señora Clara, and the six weeks at the expiration of which it was expected the morasses would be traversable had already elapsed, without any prospect arising of my being able to pursue my journey. At the close of the day's labours, I often sat with my young hostess, for whom I had conceived a strong attachment, upon the stone bench outside the casa, and fed her unsophisticated fancy with tales of the wonders of European lands.

We were sitting at supper one evening, when a flourish of trumpets suddenly rang through the air and died away in the distance. The echo had scarcely ceased to resound before a cry of 'Cortinas!' was raised, and a few minutes after a body of horse galloped into the village.

Before I could recover from the alarm this dreaded name inspired, a tall figure, followed by several other persons, entered the casa without a word of greeting. I instantly recognised Señor Cortinas, who had previously seen me as a prisoner.

This man in every respect fulfilled the wants of his party. He was a freebooter, disgusted with the calm uniformity of a quiet life, with a taste for the highway and the nightly bivouac under the open sky; with an especial taste for other men's goods, and an affection for the fat swine and poultry of the peasants, which he was in the constant habit of thieving and appropriating to his own use during his expeditions. War was his golden age. It afforded him the desired opportunity of passing over from one party to the other, taking care always to embrace the side that paid him best. He was a man as utterly devoid of honour as of conscience. The excuse, 'I have been wrong; I repent and come back to your colours,' gave him a lamentable facility in breaking his oath, and in turning Republican or Imperialist according as he imagined would suit his interest.

He threw himself upon a chair, and, taking me for the servant of the house, ordered me roughly to look after the horses. Delighted to escape without recognition, I hastened out of the room.

When I quitted the casa, I found the streets crowded with guerillas, busily engaged in preparing their evening meal. The visit of Cortinas' band proved a severe visitation to Santa Cruz, for

the plunderers spared nothing. Whatever was valuable and easy of transport was unhesitatingly carried away.

Cortinas had ordered supper for himself and his officers, and marched tigerishly up and down the casa, cursing and swearing with hungry impatience at the delay in its preparation. When I had looked after the horses, I joined Clara in the kitchen, and assisted her in that department to the best of my ability. When everything our joint knowledge of the science of cookery could effect was achieved, and supper was served, I felt so greatly relieved by the fact of Cortinas having failed to recognise me that I officiated as waiter, and played my part so much to the General's satisfaction that he gave me a piastre. I pocketed the tribute to my powers as an actor with a low bow and a profusion of thanks.

While the Juarist officers dined, Clara had prepared beds for their accommodation in a neighbouring casa. It fell to my lot to conduct them to their sleeping places, but my services this time did not meet with the same acknowledgment as before. Some men are surly in their cups. Cortinas had drunk freely, and when I found difficulty in complying with his hiccuping order to pull off

his heavy riding-boots, he loaded me with curses upon my clumsiness.

As I was leaving the casa, Cortinas roared after me a command to have a *carreta* (country cart drawn by oxen) ready by three in the morning, upon which to transport the baggage, i. e. the plunder stolen from Santa Cruz. This order was very unwelcome. I was a tolerable proficient in all kinds of Mexican farm-work by this time, but ox-driving was an art I had not yet learnt. I laid my case before the Alcalde. He went to Cortinas and begged to be excused furnishing means of transport, on the plea that all the carters and the cattle were engaged in an outlying pasture.

The Juarist leader cursed the old man heartily for disturbing his repose, then said curtly:—'If you fail to bring up the carreta, with a man to drive, I shall take a vehicle by force and employ one of my own people. Only, in that case I shall make the man a present of cattle and carreta for his trouble. Now go to the d—l!'

No choice remained but for me to undertake the charge; yet, with wise distrust of my inexperience, the Alcalde sent Clara with me as instructress. Every preparation was made for the journey that same evening, and punctually at the appointed

hour the expedition set forth, with Cortinas riding at the head.

Ox-driving is not so easy an accomplishment as it looks. Considerable practice is required to attain facility in using the goad—a long pole with a sharp-pointed nail protruding from the extremity; and my clumsy efforts to rouse the dormant spirit of my patient team evoked my companion's hearty laughter. After a bit, however, I found out how to manage the implement, and we got on, upon the whole, better than could have been expected.

We reached Del Saldo, the place of our destination, about five in the afternoon, and were dismissed by Cortinas without a word of acknowledgment for our services. We rested a few hours, and fed the cattle; then I joined Clara in the carreta, and we jogged quietly by moonlight home.

Some days later, travelling merchants with caravans of goods passed through Santa Cruz on their way from Matamoras, and their arrival gave the signal for my departure. I packed my portable property together with a singular mixture of joy and sorrow, in which, however, the former feeling predominated.

Stepping into the casa, I bade Clara farewell.

Then springing upon my horse, which stood ready at the door, and accompanied by the Alcalde, I galloped rapidly from the spot. At the turn of the road I looked back to take a parting glimpse at the place where I had passed so many happy hours. Clara was still standing at the door, watching our lessening figures. I waved my hand to her; she answered by a corresponding gesture, then rushed into the casa, and I saw her no more.

The Alcalde accompanied me as far as a small poverty-stricken rancho, called San Miguel, and situated in the lowlands. Here we parted, and he returned to Santa Cruz. I took up my quarter at a wretched hovel, where I passed a sleepless trouble-tossed night

CHAPTER X.

BRAVOS REPUBLICANOS.

CHAPTER X.

NEXT MORNING I resumed my journey. The district through which I passed was lonely. Large plantations, clothed with sugar-cane, lay upon either side of the wood. I halted at the beginning of the noonday heat, and stretched myself under the shelter of a spreading plane tree, while my horse grazed hard by. The pictures and experiences of the past rose from the depths of memory, and passed in quick succession over the canvas of my mind.

Thus engaged, a rustle in some bushes near me caught my attention. Not knowing whether wild beast or enemy—the terms are nearly synonymous—might be watching me, I turned towards the direction of the noise, and caught sight of an ill-favoured Mexican on horseback, about to launch his *lazo* at my neck. I was mounted, and had the fellow covered with my revolver in a trice. The

moment the rascal caught a glimpse of my barrel, he was off.

Thinking it probable more of these gentry might be lurking about the neighbourhood, I crossed the road in a slanting direction, and struck at a canter into a narrow bridle path. This track, unluckily, led me far away from the road to Matamoras. As I got ultimately quite bewildered, and altogether lost my way, I was obliged to pursue my march at a venture, for I was as little at home in these parts as in the backwoods of America. I was also in perpetual danger of being snapped up by roving bands of guerillas.

This arduous and objectless straying about lasted several days, during which my hairbreadth escapes from capture were legion. Often and often nothing but a bush or a tree separated me from a band of the freebooters I had correctly surmised to be in the district. Exhausted by hardships and fatigue, I was one evening almost on the point of succumbing, when the glitter of firearms immediately in front reanimated my drooping spirits with the love of life. I was upon the point of plunging into some bushes on my right, when a hoarse voice, shouting 'Quien evviva?' acquainted me that I had already been observed.

'Un amigo!' was my instant reply, as I advanced with an air of confidence I was very far from feeling.

I was thereupon conducted to the resting-place of the chief, who cross-examined me as to who I was, whence I came, and whither I was going.

I announced myself as one of the foreign officers attached to Escobedo's staff, producing in proof my sketch-book, which happened to contain a villanously executed portrait of the Republican General. My other answers (all equally veracious with the first) to the guerilla chief's enquiries were at any rate such as satisfied him, for he invited me to share his supper, and presented me with a handful of cigarettes.

Shortly after my joining the party the rain came down in torrents, rendering a bivouac under the open sky anything but agreeable. Towards midnight, however, the weather cleared, enabling us to make up the fire to dry our garments.

The moon had just emerged from behind the clouds when I took leave of the Juarist leader, and pursued my journey alone. The heavy rain had made the ground so difficult to traverse that my horse sank in places over his knees, so that I was obliged to dismount and lead him. Gradually

the sky cleared; the moon shone out clear and bright, and enabled me plainly to distinguish my course. When day dawned, I perceived a single casa a little distance on my right. Reaching the spot, I asked the only inhabitant—a shepherd—for some food. He had nothing to offer me but a sort of soup, prepared with cheese; but this was sufficient to stay my hungry stomach. Stretching myself upon my blanket, I soon fell into a deep sleep, from which I did not awake until after mid-day.

I was just engaged in saddling my horse when my eye accidentally encountered, at a distance of three or four hundred paces, a carriage with a white covering, drawn by two couple of mules. As I took some further time in getting ready, the vehicle was lost to view before I was prepared to start, but I did not abandon the hope of overtaking it. I paid the Mexican shepherd for his trouble and hospitality, and set off in the direction taken by the carriage.

Although I urged on my horse to the limit of his ability, and the fresh tracks left by the vehicle in the rain-soddened ground afforded amply sufficient guide to the correct route, I was unable to come up with the carriage before sunset. Night

fell, and prevented my following up the trail until the morning.

I determined upon setting up my bivouac by the side of an ancient cactus tree, close to the side of the road. Here I rolled myself in my blanket, and tethered my horse to a tree a few paces distant. I might have slept perhaps a couple of hours, when I was suddenly aroused by the impatient stamping of my trusty companion. In my critical position no sign of danger was too trivial to be disregarded. I listened for a time, but heard nothing, and was just upon the point of dropping off to sleep again, when I suddenly heard loud voices and the rapid strokes of approaching horses' hoofs. I sprang up in alarm, and retreated behind the cactus. It was well I took this precaution, for next moment a couple of horsemen, galloping along with the reckless rapidity characteristic of the Mexican rider, passed with the speed of lightning precisely over the spot where I had lain a minute before. But for my faithful horse's warning, I must infallibly have been trampled to death. The remainder of the night passed without interruption, and, after breakfasting upon tortillas, some cheese, and an onion, I resumed my march.

Vegetation henceforth increased in beauty. I began to find flowers redolent of perfume in the luxuriant grass upon the banks of springs and brooks. It is sweet to come upon these oases, which occasionally break the dreary monotony of the marshy country lying between Santa Cruz and Matamoras, and very pleasant to revel in the contemplation of the charming picture, protected from the scorching rays of the noonday sun by the leafy canopy of a well-clothed tree.

Unperceived myself, I had the opportunity of observing four men enjoying this species of luxury, at the entrance to a little wood from which I was about to emerge into the open, when I luckily caught sight of their figures. They were reclining upon the grassy slope of a dry ditch, and, regardless of the noonday heat, were improving the occasion by busily passing a large bottle filled with *muscal** from hand to hand. Their backs were towards me, but I was near enough narrowly to scrutinise their appearance, and to hear every word they spoke.

Each of these worthies applied himself to the bottle in long and exhaustive gulps, pulling at

* A highly intoxicating spirituous liquor, roughly distilled from maize. It is strongly affected by all Mexicans of the inferior class.

it apparently with as much gusto as a child drinks off a cupful of the sweetest milk. They then fell with similar appetite upon a huge shoulder of roasted kid, of which, after a few minutes, nothing but very insignificant fragments remained.

Their appetite was as predatory as their vocation, for all four belonged to the Juarist irregular horse called 'Bravos Republicanos,' and to the most disreputable section of that highly disreputable corps. Lagging in the rear when the bugle sounded the advance, but forward enough when there was a chance of pillage or of booty; easily exhausted when called upon to make use of their arms in honourable warfare, but indefatigable when they had any opportunity of robbing, destroying, or insulting women—they behaved as ruthlessly as unchained demons towards friend and foe. They spared neither cottage nor palace, church nor cloister. No booty was too insignificant for their clutch. Heedless of prayers and entreaties, deaf to remonstrance, they would drive off a peasant's last cow and slaughter it at their first halt, as readily as they would wring the neck of his weeping wife's only remaining hen. It was a matter of profound indifference to which party the

sufferers belonged. All were alike fair game, to be plundered and ill-treated, and, if troublesome, silenced by a bullet or a stab. Of such elements was a large part of the force composed, placed by Juarez in the field to re-establish the Republic and protect its partisans.

The dress—if it might so be termed—of these banditti afforded evident proof of their utter want of discipline, as well as of the roving, adventurous, and disorderly life they led in this period of war and disturbance. The first glance showed that they had been pressed into the service as implements fitted for purposes of destruction, rather than as soldiers, however sanguinary, meant to be led on to victory. In this exhaustive struggle every weapon was welcomed by the Liberals that could be used against the enemy. The Juarists had eagerly availed themselves of the close of the American struggle to enlist thousands of mercenaries beyond the Rio Grande, less to launch them against the Imperialists than to let them loose, like a swarm of locusts, to devastate the land.

The filibusters I found encamped upon the verge of the wood wore no uniforms, and had no other connection with each other than that of being

stragglers from various detachments. All four were tall powerful fellows, with red hair and beards. Their appearance, and the badness of their Spanish accent, induced me to believe they were recently enlisted Irish recruits.

Their attire was as dissimilar as it was primitive. One fellow was draped in a Mexican leathern horse-cloth, and wore upon his head the ungainly article the Americans call 'a stove-pipe,' the English 'a chimney-pot.' Another was clad in a blanket, through holes in which protruded his bare and brawny arms; this man's shock head was covered with a cap. The third wore a huge broad-leaved Mexican felt *sombrero*, covered with a white cloth to keep off the effects of the sun. The fourth rejoiced in a shako-like cap, the front of which was adorned with the American eagle.

Equal diversity prevailed with respect to their arms. All had revolvers, but one carried in addition an American sabre, sharply ground; the second a rapier with a cruciform hilt; the third a battle-axe, stolen from Heaven knows what collection of antique arms; while the fourth bore a species of lance, the shaft still green and covered with bark, the head ground to a point upon some grindstone picked up by the way.

Four small, wiry, wretchedly harnessed horses, with long untended manes, were picking up such nutriment as they could gather from the leaves of bushes by the roadside. At times they shook their manes, and cast back upon their owners a fiery and expressive glance, showing that their attachment, moderation, and courage rendered them, notwithstanding their staring coats and unkempt exterior, of greater value than many a dearly purchased beast.

The sight of these poor animals, and the burdens with which they were loaded, displayed better than pages of description the kind of thievish greedy rabble to which these four Juarists belonged. A rolled-up mattress lay upon the back of one; a copper kettle and saucepan stolen at the last halting-place rattled with every step of another; two dried hams balanced each other across the crupper of the third; while cooking utensils and crockery ware of miscellaneous character were carried by the last.

When I came up behind them, the four comrades were in that comfortable frame of mind the enjoyment of a hearty meal rarely fails to engender. I give the following as a specimen of their discourse,

though it is hardly necessary to observe that it was, in addition, richly larded with oaths.

'The Mexican muscal isn't half as good as the American whisky,' said one fellow, shaking the bottle to see how much there was left; 'but it goes mighty quick. 'Tis them devils of padres, I'm thinkin', makes it so weak, to rile us.'

'Miguel 's right,' chimed in the second. ''Twould be a charity to have a special clause inserted in the articles of peace: "And be it further agreed upon between the high contracting parties, for the benefit of the brave defenders of the Republic, that every muscal distiller and tavern-keeper shall be in duty bound to keep, at his own cost and expense, a full private of the Juarist cavalry in his establishment, that the same may taste every gallon of muscal, to be sure it's of the proper strength."'

'And d'ye fancy now, stupid, when Maximilian 's sent to the right about, they'll ever consarn themselves about such poor devils as we are?' sneered the third.

'As for peace,' observed the last bravo, complacently stroking his moustache, 'tis many a gallon of muscal will find its way down this child's throttle afore that comes to pass. Take my word

for it, President Juarez hasn't brought us all the way from t'other side the Rio Bravo, United States, jist for the purpose of making peace. Look at the different parties among the Mexicans alone, to say nothing of the Imperialists, Juarez, Ortega, Canales, Cortinas, and Carvajal—all snarling like so many dogs over the same bone. Add the claims of the big bugs in each of the parties, who care not a curse whether 'tis priest or soldier that buries the empire, so long as they come in for part of the legacy. Take my word for it, camerados, when the thing draws to an end, and Maximilian 's cracked up, there'll be mighty pretty pickings for whoever knows how to get at 'em.'

'Why, you speak like a phee-losopher, Jack. You're not half such a fool as anybody 'd think you were from your looks. But just answer me one question, old wiseacre. 'D'ye chance to remember we've just come from Monterey, where that infernal Dupont 'has given us a deuce of a licking? Two or three more o' the same sort, and the empire will stand firm as a rock. We may go back then where we came from, without any pickings at all. Hey? What say you to that view of the question, my Trojan?'

'Bah!' returned the orator, snapping his fingers

with an air of supreme contempt. 'What signifies a thrashing or two from the French or the Austrians? Let others fight who like. We run away, and come in afterwards to share the spoil. Besides, the *vomito* is our staunch ally. In a year or two more it will have cleared off all the estranjeros, and we shall have the country to ourselves.'

During the whole of this delectable conversation I had not stirred from my hiding-place. At first I thought it best to wait until the rascals had decamped; but as they showed little sign of moving, I finally decided upon riding out on to the road, and trusting to my horse's speed to carry me out of danger. If things came to the worst, I could but defend myself, and, against such contemptible enemies, had little fear of the result. Retreating a little distance into the wood, I debouched on the highway close by the Juarist bivouac. When the fellows saw me, they jumped up hastily, and sauntered down towards the road. As I drew near, I gave them 'Good day' in English, to which they replied.

Their first demand was for whiskey. Upon my answer that I had none with me, they asked who I was, and whither I was going. Apparently dissatisfied with my reply, they still kept pressing

closer, and I was upon the point of warning them with my revolver to come nearer at their peril, when a fresh arrival changed the character of the scene.

Two horsemen suddenly dashed at full speed out of the bushes skirting the highway, and leapt their horses across the dry ditch on to the spot where the filibusters a few moments previously had been encamped. Here they reined up, and shouted a Spanish greeting.

'The very place for a tired man to rest in!' exclaimed the foremost rider, jumping off his horse, and throwing himself at full length upon the turf.

His companion was a singular-looking personage. A mystery to me then, he has remained a mystery ever since. His round and beardless cheeks showed him to be very young. His black hair, the olive hue of his complexion, and his slight and meagre figure, displaying more nervous energy than muscular power, testified to a striking difference of race between him and his comrade. His leathern jacket was ornamented with braid that might once have glittered with gold, but was now reddish, faded, and threadbare. A broad belt, supporting a sword, was clasped around his slender

waist. Long yellow boots clothed his feet, and a cartouch-box hung from a strap across his shoulders.

Gazing around him with an open fearless look, he slowly dismounted, whistling, and turned his eyes alternately upon me and upon his comrade, who had now joined the Juarist filibusters in playing at *monte*, the national passion.

'Come and sit down with us, Egyptian,' exclaimed his friend, 'and try your luck with a few reals!'

The young man complied.

I took this favourable opportunity of shouting an 'Adios, Señores!' to this respectable company; and, setting spurs to my horse, made off at a rapid gallop, which speedily carried me out of sight and hearing.

CHAPTER XI.

BESET BY THIEVES.

CHAPTER XI.

My horse reached the summit of a hill in a few seconds, and a blooming shady valley winding down the other descent lay before me. I galloped past a large pasture ground, and soon disappeared behind a thick cactus hedge, past which my way led over a rustic bridge built of the stems of trees, and through a long avenue of oleander, at the end of which was situated a deserted plantation. The sunbeams shone upon a large square house, whose thick walls, narrow windows, and massive lofty chimneys seemed to denote some ancient family mansion, robbed of its former grandeur. There had been, originally, a tower at either end of the building, but one only remained. The other had either been destroyed by artillery, or struck by lightning; and a picturesque ruin, overgrown with ivy, and closely embraced by clinging stems of the wild vine, showed the place where it had stood.

Evidence was afforded of the means of defence that had lain at the disposal of the ancient masters of the place. The relics of a moat were still to be seen, into which the running waters of a brook had been introduced. Upon one side of the court-yard, they were now diverted into a species of earthen trough for watering cattle; nearer the house, the stream ran through a washing-shed, covered with a straw roof.

I rode through the ruinous gateway into the court-yard, where my horse involuntarily pulled up short. The grateful scent of a waggon laden with new-mown hay had entered his nostrils, and aroused his appetite. The poor beast snuffed up the odour with as much delight as a human gourmand catches the whiff of a decaying hare.

I dismounted in a second, and shouted in at the open door—

'Holloa! Is there anyone here who can give a man food and quarters?'

A young Mexican girl ran hastily out at the door, and asked, quite breathless, what it was that I desired. She listened with evident alarm to my reply. It was not, I imagine, the foreign accent audible in my Spanish that terrified her, so much as my wild and ferocious aspect. Probably, after

a bit, she thought the old gentleman was not so black as he 's painted, for she timidly invited me to enter. Following my guide, I was introduced into a spacious room at the back of the house.

'Mother,' said the girl, 'here is a Señor who wishes for supper and a night's lodging.'

An elderly woman, occupied in weaving, laid aside her frame, and bade me welcome; then resumed her seat, and worked on busily.

My entertainer was a grave and dignified matron, such as one seldom meets with in this torrid land, for—be the reason what it may—women rarely grow old in Mexico. Notwithstanding her age, her features showed her to be still in full possession of strength and vigour; time had not bowed the uprightness of her figure, and her sunburnt complexion afforded proof that she had not long exchanged the open air and the labours of the field for the comparative rest and quietude of indoor life. Like her daughter, she wore the ordinary dress of Mexican women, but her attire was exceptionally neat and clean. Her perfect quiet and composure presented a singular contrast to her daughter's mobile activity. Both were clearly different in temperament. The one stronger, the other more delicate; the former better organised

for efficiency in practical work-a-day life, the latter weaker of nerve, and more under the control and influence of her imagination.'

Around the walls of the room hung numerous portraits, in massive mostly dusty frames. But among their number was one—suspended opposite the old woman's chair—more carefully looked after than the rest, and better protected from the dampness of the ancient walls. Stepping nearer, to see whether I could discover the cause of this exceptional treatment, I found, to my great surprise, that the portrait bore the well-known lineaments of Alexander von Humboldt. I eagerly enquired of the old woman how the likeness of the famous traveller came into this deserted spot.

'Señor,' she replied, 'my late husband was a medical man in Mexico. He had the privilege of frequently accompanying that distinguished man upon his journeys through the country; and when the foreign caballero returned to Europe, he sent my husband his portrait as a token of regard. After I became a widow, I brought with me this picture, from which I could not part. My child and I withdrew to this plantation, which, as you see, has suffered greatly from the war.'

We exchanged a few further remarks upon the

subject, and the reverence with which I spoke of my celebrated countryman evidently gave me a higher place in my hostess's regard.

We were still conversing, when a covered carriage, drawn by four mules, and followed by a similar number of negroes on foot, drove into the court-yard. Hastening out, I found it to be the same equipage I had seen a few days previously, without being able to overtake. The carriage was occupied by a middle-aged gentleman, his wife, and two daughters, both children.

The arrival of these travellers and their suite soon imparted life and animation to the aspect of the ruined house. The loquacity of the gentleman soon made us acquainted. I found him to be a certain Doctor W. of Texas, who had sided with the South in the late American struggle, and emigrated to Mexico after its close. When the French evacuated Monterey, he had quitted the town with his family to escape the exactions of the Juarists, and was now on his way back to the United States.

In the course of our conversation I called the doctor's attention to the fact that I had encountered six Juarist bravos at no great distance from our present halting-place, and suggested that it

was very possible they might still be lurking in the neighbourhood. Very probably my new companion had something to lose, for he immediately distributed arms among his men, to be prepared in case of a night surprise.

Supplies at the rancho were scanty, but as the doctor had laid in ample stock of provisions for the journey at Monterey, he was able to help out the larder. Various savoury smells now began at times to greet our nostrils, giving promise of a good supper, which was destined to be soon fulfilled. Big Tom—a tall good-humoured negro, whose capacious mouth was perpetually upon the broad grin—bore in a smoking *olla* with an air of triumphant delight, betraying the fullest consciousness of his cleverness as an excellent cook. In the doctor's opinion this was his only merit. Big Tom would do honour to the culinary department of the most refined establishment in the world, he opined, but especial care must be taken, when he was in the neighbourhood, to lock up the spoons. How far his master's poor opinion of Big Tom's honesty was justified, I am unable to say, but this I do know: that a more diverting fellow of his race I never beheld. After supper he amused us uncommonly with songs and nigger dances, until my

sides fairly ached with laughter at his quaint sayings and amusing pranks.

Tired out with the fatigues of the journey, all went early to bed. The doctor's servants, and the few labourers employed on the plantation, made a great parade of sitting up under the washing-shed, to be prepared for the bravos, in case they should venture an attack. But as I feel morally convinced the rascals all slept their hardest, and snored in concert, perhaps it was as well that no attack was made.

Bright sunrise succeeded a grey and cloudy dawn the following day. In excellent spirits our little party bade farewell to our kind hostess and her daughter, and, refreshed by a good night's rest and a hearty breakfast, we set out upon our road. For my part, I felt particularly exhilarated. I thought I perceived some chance of soon getting to the end of my long and toilsome march; for the opportunity, kindly offered me by the doctor, of travelling with his party, was a boon of too great value to be declined.

At the commencement of the noonday heat—when travelling is both unpleasant and dangerous from the possibility of sunstroke—we halted, and rested in the shade until four in the afternoon.

The cattle grazed contentedly in an adjacent pasture, and the human items of the company lay stretched at full length on the grass. We started again when the heat began to abate, intending to reach La Coma before nightfall. But an unexpected misfortune threw a blight over all my plans.

We had hardly resumed our route before my horse suddenly fell sick. I suppose the poor beast had eaten too heartily of the abundant fare set before it the previous night, and was suffering from surfeit. At any rate it rapidly became worse, so that I was forced to dismount to lead it, and thus fell behind. The mules trotted on, and the carriage containing my companions soon disappeared over the crest of a hill.

All my efforts to come up with the doctor before nightfall proved fruitless. Serious alarm assailed me lest, in this helpless and deserted condition, I might be overtaken by guerillas, and lose all my property, perhaps even my life. On a sudden my unfortunate horse halted, staggered from side to side, and fell with a groan. I tried to rouse him, but without success. The animal grew puffy and swollen, and presently gave up the ghost. Before I had finished unstrapping my baggage from the body, the clank of hoofs sounded in the distance,

and in a few minutes the two guerillas I had seen join the Bravos Republicanos by the side of the wood upon the previous day, galloped along the road. The moment they perceived me, they pulled up their smoking steeds.

'Buenos noches, Señor!' said one of the fellows. 'I see you have had a misfortune with your horse.'

'Si, Señor,' I returned curtly.

'Quiere V. compañeros para Matamoras?' enquired the other.

'Si, Señor,' I repeated, as bluntly as before.

Perfect quiet and silence reigned over the scene. In whichever direction I turned, darkness, profound and impenetrable, veiled every surrounding object from my eyes. Entirely ignorant of the road, this circumstance forced me—though sorely against my will—to entrust myself to the guidance of the two Juarists, at least as far as La Coma. The younger man readily consented to take my effects upon his horse, while I walked by his side. For security's sake, and to guard against sudden attack, I kept my hand upon the hilt of a short Mexican sabre buckled to the left side of the saddle. La Coma was, as I understood, about an hour's march further, when, thoroughly exhausted with the long day's journey, amounting altogether to somewhat

over forty miles, I asked my companions to halt, and allow me a few minutes' rest. They assented with the most eager readiness, a fact which, of itself, ought to have put me on my guard. But I was so completely knocked up, that, at the moment, I could really think of nothing but collecting all the little strength still left to me, so as to be able to complete the distance to La Coma.

As will of course have been anticipated, I had no sooner thrown myself upon the grass by the road-side than the two rascals set off at full speed, sparks flying from the hoofs of their galloping horses, and glittering through the night.

'Adios, Señor!' they shouted as they disappeared; adding, with sarcastic politeness, 'Llegados á La Coma, mandaremos preparar la comida de V.!'*

Roused to momentary energy by their impudence, I jumped to my feet, and fired a couple of shots after their vanishing figures. I missed, of course —hasty shots generally do—and the peal of ironical laughter that floated to my ear testified to my ill-success.

* 'When we reach La Coma, we'll be sure to order your supper!'

CHAPTER XII.

HARD RIDING.

CHAPTER XII.

THOUGH, owing to the wandering life I had lately led, the majority of my personal effects were of scanty value, and their loss therefore the less to be deplored, yet there were sundry articles among my baggage, to me priceless, and impossible to be replaced. I had taken off my coat on account of the heat, and thrown it across the guerilla's horse, only a minute or so before he and his comrade decamped. Among the miscellaneous items one of the pockets contained, was my Note-book, the faithful companion of all my wanderings in Mexico, and from the contents of which these Memoirs have been chiefly compiled.

My entire wardrobe now consisted of a large straw hat, shirt, trowsers, and boots. Everything else that I possessed, save my revolver—which I luckily retained—had disappeared with the guerillas. Rich in one experience more, I consoled

myself with the hope that this present misfortune might perhaps prove the means of helping me to another horse, for I was fully determined—notwithstanding the start the robbers had obtained—to follow them up as soon as I reached La Coma.

Oblivious of fatigue, I strode on sturdily, and soon perceived, a little on one side the road, the reflection of a large fire. I fancied at first I had already arrived at La Coma, but, coming nearer, discovered I had hit upon the spot my garrulous acquaintance, the Texan doctor, had selected for his bivouac. While enlightening his astonished mind upon the cause of my present scarecrow-like appearance, a couple of horsemen cantered down the road. They stopped close by, and asked lights for their cigaritos. I reflected a moment, and, while handing them what they desired, begged them for a slight remuneration to take me on with them to La Coma. One of the men, who rode a large strong horse, readily agreed.

Tired though I was, one spring seated me firmly behind the Mexican. But though the man was willing to carry me, the horse was not. The animal reared and kicked, and tried his hardest to get rid of the unwelcome burden; but he had

an old rough-rider to deal with, and I sat as if riveted to the saddle. Finding all his efforts fruitless, the ill-tempered brute took it into his head to bolt, and darted off at a headlong gallop.

'Hilloa, amigos! Take me with you!' cried the other Mexican, trying to overtake us in vain. 'Caracho! Can't you hear me? What the deuce are you after? Caracho, Caracho! Have you both gone mad?'

Away dashed the hard-mouthed beast through the darkness, the Mexican sawing with both hands for bare life at the bridle, I holding on with might and main round his waist, both of us shouting at the top of our voices—and all without the slightest influence upon our runaway Bucephalus. After darting at his utmost speed up a slight incline, he never halted—as I expected he would—when he reached the summit, but thundered down the steep and stony road leading into La Coma, the lights of which were seen to glitter through the gloom. Straight ahead he flew, without a pause, into the rancho, where he pulled up, amidst a crowd of other horses, with a sudden jerk that nearly sent us rolling from the saddle.

'Caracho, Señor! That was a d——l of a ride!' exclaimed the Mexican excitedly, as he jumped

to the ground, and began to loosen the reeking animal's girths.

'Truly, my friend. I thought we should have broken our necks at least a dozen times,' was my reply, as I slipped into his hand the promised reward, and felt truly grateful at being once more safe upon terra firma.

We entered the Alcalde's casa, which I found to my surprise occupied by a number of Juarist officers on the march to Monterey. Hitherto, it ought to be stated, I had invariably given myself out as an officer upon Escobedo's staff, and, thus far, had not encountered any distrust. But here I was placed in a very critical position, for, if questioned, I had no proofs of the veracity of my assertion to produce. I was therefore on the point of beating a hasty retreat, when the Alcalde caught sight of me, and asked my business.

Immediately upon my entry into the casa, one man among the Juarist officers, wearing the uniform of a Republican general, had particularly attracted my notice. His features appeared familiar, yet I could not, for the life of me, recollect where I had seen that saturnine visage before. An officer entering, and addressing him by name, proved to me that I was not mistaken.

General Tapia—the object of my attention—was not over forty-five, but his beard was already grizzled, and his closely cut hair beginning to turn white. His bushy eyebrows, however, from under which sparkled clear and penetrating small dark eyes, were perfectly black, revealing that it was less the approach of age, than the cares and hardships of the civil warfare in which he had played a prominent part for twenty years, that had sprinkled his head with snow. He wore the uniform of the regular Republican army, consisting in a green coat with gold-lace epaulettes, and wide red trowsers terminating in long riding-boots furnished with spurs. The red sash round his waist was discoloured by wind and rain. He wore a dagger in his girdle, and a long black-hilted sabre hung by his side. His stern face, stiff unbending figure, and upright carriage, all bespoke the man of unyielding and settled purpose.

'You are an officer of General Escobedo's staff, I understand, Señor?' he demanded of me presently, in a voice as harsh as his appearance.

'Si, Señor,' I replied.

'Where are your papers?'

Expecting this question, I drew from my trowsers pocket the little sketch-book containing the

rough sketch of Escobedo before alluded to, and handed it to the General, with the remark that all my other papers were among the effects I had lost by the guerillas.

The General advanced to the table, and examined the sketch by the light; then, apparently satisfied, said to the Alcalde, pointing to me:—'You will assist him to pursue the robbers, and recover his property.'

The wretched little caricature of Escobedo's features, scrawled with a stumpy pencil, had thus a second time stood me in good stead, and helped me out of a most critical position.

The General added briefly that the Alcalde would take immediate measures to help me to regain my own, and dismissed me with a curt greeting. Few words were so clearly in his eyes the perfection of wisdom that I at once fell in with his humour; thanked him in the briefest form of speech consistent with the respect due to his rank, and quitted the casa with a joyful heart, to hunt up something to eat.

Very shortly afterwards, General Tapia and his staff left La Coma, riding rapidly to overtake his troops, who had already marched forwards.

A few tortillas were all, in the way of refresh-

ment, I could manage to procure. No time indeed was allowed to look after anything else, had even more been forthcoming, for the preparations for departure were already completed. In company with three well-armed Mexicans, I set forth in search of the robbers, just as the last quarter of the moon was rising faintly above the horizon.

Straight as the crow flies, over hedges and ditches, across fields, pastures, walls, and brooks, these hardy riders followed up the pursuit without regarding obstacles. They must have had a pretty shrewd notion *ab initio* where the vagabonds were to be found, for enquiry at the first rancho we passed through elicited information which showed we were upon the track.

Some distance further on we changed horses, and proceeded at the same speed as before. On a sudden the foremost Mexican ordered a halt, and desired us to keep back. He rode on alone, and turning to the right, was soon lost sight of among the bushes. A few minutes of anxious expectation succeeded; then, simultaneously with the signal agreed upon—a shrill whistle—a shot rang through the night.

Darting forward into the thick brushwood, we were just in time to see the two robbers make their

escape, their flying figures vanishing with a rapidity we could not hope to emulate. The leader of our party, however, by no means gave up the chase. Thoroughly acquainted with every bridle-path and hiding-place in the district, he felt sure, from the direction the guerillas had taken, that they must ultimately pass De Lobo, a secluded rancho, to which he knew of a short cut. At this point the robbers could be intercepted.

Finding it impossible to continue at such a pace as we had hitherto been going, I told my companions I would follow on more slowly, with which they were perfectly content. They set off at full gallop, and were lost to sight and hearing in a minute.

Taking the direction given me by the Mexicans, I passed through several ranchos entirely abandoned by their inhabitants. The aspect of the devastation caused by the war, which came more closely under my notice during this ride than at any previous time, was very depressing. Houses with doors broken open or hanging by a single hinge, the windows shattered, the walls burnt and blackened, all empty, desolate, and silent, continually met the eye. The French and Belgians had not spared the crucifixes set up at cross-roads, nor

the images of the Virgin occurring at intervals in niches built in walls. Wherever in former times either an altar or a crucifix was to be seen, nothing was to be met with now but a heap of ashes or a ruin. As I rode past occasional churches, I observed in almost every instance that the doors had been burst open, the interior plundered and used as a stable, the shrines devastated and overthrown, the altar broken up and converted into firewood, the bells carried away—probably to be melted down for gun-metal or cast into bullets—the walls shattered, rent, and broken, while through their ragged gaps the moonlight now streamed in upon the desecrated fane.

Woe to the dead who lay buried within the shadow of an altar! They had been violently torn from their graves, their coffins rudely ransacked for plunder, their perishing remains despoiled of valuables the hand of affection had left untouched, their bones cast unheeded aside and scattered to the winds!

I was so terribly fatigued that I was forced to dismount every now and then and rest. The dawn gradually dispelled the painful emotions of the night. I passed through an extensive wood shortly after daybreak, and found the sight of the works

of Nature infinitely more soothing to my mind than contemplation of the evil wrought by man. As I issued from among the trees, I saw the rancho De Lobo at a short distance immediately in front. I counted every minute with impatience, for I was so much exhausted that I could hardly stand.

The district in which De Lobo is situated is very monotonous. Rice-fields occupy large stretches of the marshy ground, in which the plant certainly flourishes to admiration, but which is also the fertile hotbed of the miasmatic fevers that ravage this part of the country.

Riding between the high thorn hedges that enclose these fields, I entered a court-yard at the commencement of the village. The sight of the two guerillas' horses, tethered to a post, and calmly nibbling at a heap of maize-straw, at once announced that Nemesis had overtaken their masters. One of the Mexicans who had accompanied me from La Coma ran up next moment, exclaiming, with an air of triumph,

'Los dos ladrones, Señor, prisioneros!'

He pointed as he spoke to a small stone isolated building, furnished with a grated window. Stepping up to the aperture, I looked in, but could

only see one of the guerillas, with his arm in a sling, gloomily marching up and down his prison. I was upon the point of turning to enquire after his companion, when my foot struck against a human body, covered with straw, lying close at my side. The Mexican answered my astonished exclamation with a quiet, 'Moro, Señor.'

It appeared that the guerillas had offered a determined resistance, but were finally overpowered with the help of Tomas de Leon, the owner of the casa, and the elder man was slain. Entering the house, I found the other Mexicans assembled, drinking round a table, for they took no small credit to themselves at having caught the robbers.

CHAPTER XIII.

PAR NOBILE FRATRUM.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOMAS DE LEON was unquestionably the most polished man I had yet encountered among those of his countrymen not belonging to the superior classes. He drew up a well-worded report of the capture of one guerilla and death of his companion. I distributed a few reals among the Mexicans, who were profuse in acknowledgments, and at once began to prepare for their return journey to La Coma. They had determined to carry back the guerilla with them to the Alcalde, who would have to decide his fate.

The prisoner, nevertheless, maintained resolute composure. He looked around him with a perfectly fearless air, whistling a Mexican dance-tune with complete unconcern. At times his gaze fell upon his captors, and his eyes lighted up with the ferocious glare of a tiger who finds himself unexpectedly trapped. His escort were in jovial cue.

Having eaten and drunk their fill, they took their prisoner in the centre—afoot, as I had confiscated to my own use his horse and its furniture—and set off on their journey.

I cannot plead guilty to my conscience having pricked me sorely for having caused the death of the slain Mexican. It is doubtful whether his fate was not to be preferred to that probably awaiting his companion. Hanging was the least the latter had to expect, by the laws of Mexico, as a highway-robber taken red-handed; and if the Alcalde suspected him of being connected with a gang, he was liable to be tortured until he gave up the names of his accomplices, and brought to the scaffold afterwards all the same, *pour encourager les autres.*

The prison whence the Mexican guerilla had just been removed afforded me comfortable shelter for the night. I flung my wearied frame upon a pallet, covered with a straw mattress, and slept the sound, dreamless, and refreshing sleep that only seals the eyelids of the very tired.

I found Tomas de Leon a very civil and conversable man. He possessed strong power of will, and his firm resolution served him as the lever with which he moved unexpected obstacles out of his way. Yet, notwithstanding the great polite-

ness he showed me, there was at times a sinister expression in his features that peeped forth whenever the mask of friendly interest and courtesy was laid aside.

From this man I learnt that the entire State of Tamaulipas swarmed with brigands and guerillas, who plundered friend and foe without distinction or mercy. Since the Imperial Government had withdrawn from the frontiers into the interior of the country, the former lawlessness had returned. The ancient vices of the Mexican character—the spirit of inhumanity and the tendency to murder and theft—revived as vigorously as they have flourished from time immemorial in the land.

Still keeping up my disguise as an officer of Escobedo's staff upon a special mission, I prevailed upon Tomas de Leon to put me fairly in the way for Matamoras. Fortune seemed now to smile upon my endeavours. All my effects had been restored, including that invaluable Note-book, whose loss I had so bitterly deplored; I was again in possession of a horse, and had obtained the services of a guide. Who so fortunate as I?

Towards evening De Leon and I were passing through a thick wood, when, at a sudden turning in the road, we confronted a down-looking

Mexican caballero so abruptly that we almost ran against him.

'Hilloa! Señor Savedro! can that be you?' exclaimed my companion in astonishment.

The person addressed raised his head slowly with an air of abstraction, as if awaking from profound reverie.

'Yes, that is my name,' he answered. 'What is it? What do you want with me? I do not know you.'

'How? Is it possible, Señor, that you no longer recollect me?' demanded my guide.

'Yes, yes; your features do seem familiar,' returned Savedro, reflectively, as if searching his memory.

'You didn't find it so difficult to remember my name,' observed my conductor with a bitter smile, 'when you stood in want of a reliable guide to lead a night attack upon the Imperialists.'

This speech aroused my attention, though I was careful to conceal the interest I felt.

'Aha, it *is* you, amigo De Leon, from the rancho De Lobo, is it not?' exclaimed Savedro, in apparent delight, but without offering to shake hands with his dear amigo, all the same. 'Well, how about the promises you made to us when you went

over to the Imperialists? To hear you talk, one was inclined to fancy you possessed a panacea to stop their progress. I was led astray with your fine speeches among the rest, I remember, and gave you a letter to General Escobedo. Did you communicate your plan to him? Whether or not, I know he paid you 200 piastres, but as I never heard any more about you, I fancied you had spent them among the Imperialists in drinking prosperity to Maximilian and his government.'

'If I were a fashionable gentleman,' returned Tomas de Leon slowly, but with bitter meaning evidenced in every syllable, 'one of those white-washed sepulchres of which the Scriptures tell us, or even if I belonged to the men who, inwardly raging wolves, go about clad in sheeps' clothing, crying shame upon Babylon, and yet finding pleasure in all impure lusts, I might perhaps be capable of acting as you say. But I am purely and solely a Mexican, amigo de república, whose heart is as true as his words; ready to dare anything for the triumph of the Republican cause, and to bid defiance to all enemies without flinching a foot. As such, I am proof against the forgetfulness and the ungenerous mistrust of those I might have taken for my friends.'

The sting of these reproaches apparently penetrated to the quick. Savedro seemed to remember all the services De Leon had rendered, both as traitor and spy, to the Republican party, for he replied in a far milder tone :—

'I, for one, have always done justice to your zeal, amigo, but it was precisely because I know your firm and determined character so well that your silence surprised me.'

'Do you call the intelligence that enabled the capture of the convoy at Camargo silence? Were all the other notices of the plans and marches of the Imperialists you had from me silence? If Maximilian's party had intercepted my despatches, would they have called those patriotic communications silence? Or do you imagine I have staked my life so often in the country's cause to have all my efforts passed over without notice or reward? I can quite understand how some may prefer to concoct conspiracies in ease and security, leaving to others the task of carrying them into execution. But I have yet to learn who deserves best of the Republic—the man who confines himself to underhand wiles and scheming; or he who is always ready to give the services of his strong arm and his good sword, who has the courage to brave

the obloquy attaching to the name of spy, and to defy the punishment threatening his detection?'

'Each of us serves his party in the way he is best fitted for,' returned Savedro, with an air of self-importance. 'But may I ask now what procures me the pleasure of meeting you here?'

'The cause is twofold,' answered his friend. 'First, I am acting as guide as far as Santa Rosa to this caballero, an officer upon Señor Escobedo's staff who has been attacked by robbers; and, secondly, I am here to have some private conversation with you.'

Tomas de Leon hereupon presented me to Savedro. The latter saluted, but, deigning me no further notice, continued his talk with my companion. Their discourse was very animated, referring principally to the evacuation of Monterey by the French.

'A council is being held at Matamoras to-night about the siege of Tampico,' remarked Savedro ultimately. 'Immediately it is concluded, you will receive an answer to your proposal.'

'I long for the day when my services shall be again required,' was De Leon's reply.

During this conversation we had passed out of the wood, and had now reached the entrance of

the village, out of which rose the lofty steeple of a church. The two schemers then cordially shook hands.

'Remember,' said Savedro, 'I shall expect you at my house to-night. I have a project to explain, the success of which will bring us in much profit.'

'Depend upon my punctuality,' replied my conductor as we rode away.

Night had now completely set in. Lights began to shine in the village windows, and thousands of stars twinkled in the blue vault of the sky, shedding a mild radiance upon the surrounding landscape. The evening was so lovely that the greater part of the inhabitants were sitting or reclining before the doors of their houses, to enjoy the coolness of the air after the extraordinary heat of the day.

We rode into the Alcalde's court-yard, and unsaddled the horses ourselves, in the absence of the stable-boy. Entering the house, I was struck by a life-size figure of the Saviour upon the cross, with a representation of the Virgin, draped in mourning habiliments, kneeling at his feet. Many other pictures of saints—mere daubs, however, mostly—covered the walls.

I was hospitably received by the master of the

house, and supplied with a hearty supper. Although at first alone with the Alcalde, Tomas de Leon having gone off to keep his appointment with Savedro, the room soon filled with inquisitive Mexicans. In replying to their questions, I flatter myself I sustained the character I had assumed with a fair amount of plausibility.

A servant called me next morning shortly before dawn, and I pursued my journey, passing now through a wide stretch of prairie, without molestation. About nine A.M. I reached the little village of Victoria.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PRONUNCIAMIENTO.

CHAPTER XIV.

I WAS now in the immediate neighbourhood of Matamoras, and found I had more reason to be cautious than ever. The town was besieged by the partisan leader Cortinas, who was at present attached neither to the Juarist nor Imperial side, but, like the Gow Chrom, or bandy-legged smith, in the 'Fair Maid of Perth,' fought 'for his own hand.'

Evacuated by the Imperialists, and held now by the Republican troops, Matamoras was coveted by Cortinas as a place of importance which, once in his possession, would enable him to make an advantageous bargain for its delivery to whichever party might eventually gain the upper hand. Equally with a more astute Trimmer in the Old World, the Mexican adventurer was fully alive to the value of a 'material guarantee.'

It was night when I arrived before the town.

Although intimately acquainted with the surrounding fortifications—which, it will be remembered, I had assisted to plan—I did not think it advisable to venture in the darkness into the midst of the secret pitfalls and marshy places, whose situation, under the circumstances, it would be almost impossible to perceive. I bivouacked therefore a little distance from the main road, and did not awake until the well-remembered dark cathedral towers and the white mass of houses rose up before me in the morning grey. Lights were still visible at intervals; being the glow of the watch-fires, around which were collected the guards upon the ramparts. Upon the further side of the river, where Brownsville lies, perfect stillness prevailed.

When I approached the outworks, about a thousand men of Tamaulipas troops (artillery and infantry) were standing and lying about. Some were collected round the fires, over which hung the camp kettles and cooking-pots; others were sitting on the ground at cards, and quarrelling; a third set were plucking the unfortunate fowls that had escaped the sharp eyes of yesterday's foragers, only to be snapped up by their successors of to-day.

I rode resolutely forward to Fort Imperator, which lies close to the Rio Grande, believing, from the fewer sentries I observed in that direction, I should there gain admission to the town with less difficulty than elsewhere. But when I approached the outer line of posts, I was suddenly challenged with the demand of—'Quien evviva?'

'Amigo del República de Mejico!' I replied, and rode forwards.

Approaching the inner gate, I was stopped by the officer of the guard, who demanded my papers. Without hesitation I produced the sketch of Escobedo, that had already done me yeoman's service, and exhibited it by way of credentials. Charmed with the likeness of a general who seemed to be held in great reverence by the Juarists in that district, the officer at once granted me ready ingress. Passing through several bye-streets, I succeeded in reaching the house of an acquaintance upon the Plaza without impediment.

Since the time when I quitted it seven months previously, Matamoras had become a perfect maze. The two-wheeled country carretas, which formerly came into the town laden with rural produce daily, were no longer to be seen. Barricades were thrown up in the principal streets, and all access to them

was cut off. The beautiful pleasure-grounds around the Plaza were laid desolate; the shops were mostly closed; and signs of activity and bustle were alone observable in barracks and armourers' works. Here the main occupation was repairing old arms, for Cortinas' last attack had done considerable damage. The only tokens of life to be perceived in this desert proceeded from Juarist troops. At times the butts of a party relieving guard rang upon the pavement, and occasionally one heard a chorus of tipsy soldiers issue from a tavern, where they were drinking success and long life to the war that procured them such jovial days. The unfortunate inhabitants, who vastly preferred Imperial to Republican rule, found themselves, since the withdrawal of the Imperialist garrison under General Mejia, daily exposed to the grossest acts of violence on the part of the Juarist troops, and were deprived of all their rights. Numbers of houses, and all the churches, except the cathedral, had been plundered and destroyed by the Republican forces.

José Maria Carvajal, appointed by Juarez Governor of Matamoras, took enormous pains to harmonise the discordant political elements and parties existing in the town. He went from section to

section, lauding their gallant defence of the Republic to the skies. But he had the misfortune to infuse confidence into no party. His promises were heard with incredulity. Mistrust and hatred of his rule were increased by his abominable practice of constantly levying fresh contributions upon the inhabitants, on pretext of paying the clamorous troops their arrears, of which not a real ever passed into their hands.

Colonel Canales, who fanned the general discontent, fast assuming at the time of my arrival a revolutionary character, was scheming to get the government into his own possession.

Two days after I had entered Matamoras, both parties in the town were on the move to support their dearest interests. Armed groups attached to either faction collected in front of the Government House. Vehement discussions were going on, and the rumours—partly true, partly exaggerated—of a conspiracy among the Canales party to overthrow the Government were listened to with eager attention. The doors of the Government House were barricaded, and not a soul was allowed to pass either in or out of the building. To an unimpassioned observer like myself, it was amusing

to wander from group to group, and listen to the excited harangues of vehement speakers.

'No doubt,' maintained a supporter of Carvajal, 'that man who has just galloped up to the main-guard covered with dust brings bad news. Canales has most likely joined Cortinas, and if that's the case, God help us! We shall have bullets whistling about our ears before nightfall. And the worst of it is, that neither cannon-ball nor shell draws any distinction between an enemy to the town or a friend.'

'Caracho, Señor! What mean you by that?' cried a truculent-looking soldier, dashing his sabre violently upon the ground. 'Who cares for this paltry bit of a town and its miserable interests? 'Tis the Republic we have to look to, and the prosecution of the war. The best friend to the town is the best friend to the Republic. Viva la República de Mejico!'

A chorus of like-minded hearers took up the cry. The excitement and the noise rapidly increased. Growing bolder with impunity, the partisans of the new claimant made themselves heard.

'Canales, Canales! We want Canales as Gover-

nor!' rang through the air, and the shout was repeated close under the barred windows of the Governor's house.

'Caracho estranjeros!' 'Down with the foreigners!' was the next war-cry—an outburst specially directed against the numerous Americans known to be around the person of Carvajal.

The Governor was in a critical position, from which even his well-known coolness failed to extricate him. Suddenly the bells of the cathedral began to peal; the beat of drums resounded; two battalions of troops, shouting 'Viva Canales!' moved at double-quick on to the Plaza, and occupied all the outlets. Under these circumstances the supporters of the Governor gave up their man, and went over to his opponent. A few minutes afterwards Canales appeared in person on the scene at the head of his staff, and was hailed by the troops and the bystanders with loud acclamations of 'Evviva Canales! Gobernador del Tamaulipas!'

The revolution was accomplished. José Maria Carvajal had come to the end of his tether, and had in the meantime fled across the Rio Grande to Brownsville.

The actual inhabitants of Matamoras surveyed the proceedings throughout with stolid composure, and comparatively few—save some especially hot-headed politicians—participated in the scene. 'Habit is second nature,' says the proverb; and they had already seen the time when the reins of government had been held by four different pairs of hands in a single day.

CHAPTER XV.

ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN night had fallen, I took leave of the kind friend who had given me shelter, intending to ford the Rio Grande at a favourable spot. My friend spent much eloquence in pointing out the danger of the enterprise, which was indeed rendered more perilous than ever by the height to which the river had been swollen by recent rains. But my determination was not to be shaken. I was eager to leave a place where I was not secure from discovery for a moment, and where capture would be followed by instant execution.

'I must make the attempt,' I said, as I bade my friend farewell; 'but, depend upon it, I will use sufficient care. Do I not know what it is to live in a country where you should not take one foot off the ground before you see where to set down the other?'

Traversing the spacious garden in rear of the house, I passed through a low door in the high

stone wall that formed its boundary, and found a servant waiting with my horse. Cautiously drawing near the line of the fortifications, I succeeded in getting round the demi-lune of an entrenchment unperceived, and made for a bridge which, being thrown across a ditch, opened communication between the outworks and the river's bank. To my surprise and consternation, however, I found the floods had swept away the bridge, so that I was prevented reaching the ford.

In this unlooked-for predicament, what was to be done? I had to make up my mind speedily, for the patrol would soon be going the rounds, and discovery then was inevitable. The night was dark and moonless, so that it was too hazardous to attempt to gain the ford by another route. But the prospect of falling into the enemy's hands after so many happily surmounted trials and hardships—now, at the last moment, with harbour almost in view—was too terrible to be borne. Rather than this, I resolved to run the risk of perishing in the waves.

The Rio Grande, at the spot where I stood, was about 150 yards across. Though the distance was not excessive, yet to plunge into so rapid a river, on a dark November night, upon a horse

with whose swimming powers I was unacquainted, was an undertaking I would rather not have essayed. But 'necessitas non habet legem,' and I had no alternative.

While I was still hesitating, the tramp of the approaching patrol made itself heard, and the challenge of the sentries as their posts were approached smote upon my ear. The sound decided me in an instant. Walking my horse cautiously down the bank, I urged him into the water, and next minute he was swimming through the foaming waves. The current was strong and turbulent, but my horse luckily proved equal to the occasion. He bore up bravely, and I encouraged him as much as I dared by voice and rein. The first attempt at landing failed, owing to the slippery character of the high clayey bank upon the American shore, but, after guiding my steed a little distance further down, I succeeded in discovering an accessible spot, where, with some trouble, we managed to scramble to land.

Secure at last, I now breathed more freely, and felt that I was once more the master of my own destiny. With a grateful heart I drank in the consciousness of being again in a civilised land.

A ray of moonlight that just at this moment

peeped from among the clouds, assisted me to discover my whereabouts. The force of the current had carried me so far down the river that I was some distance below Brownsville. Leading my faithful horse by the rein, I steered across some fields towards the town, and after a stiff half-hour's walk, arrived at a tavern.

It was late, and I had to knock long before I could gain admission. The door was at last flung open, and a man made his appearance, asking in a tone of vexation,

'What on earth is it you want, sir?'

'Fire, food, and a night's lodging,' was my laconic reply.

'Go round to the court-yard, and I'll let you in,' returned the man, with a considerable increase of civility both in tone and manner.

A drowsy stable-boy took my horse, and I followed my conductor into the guest-chamber. Here, in addition to the people of the house, I found several visitors, among them officers wearing the American uniform, either assembled round the cheerful blaze or playing at hazard.

'What brings you so late this way?' asked one officer sitting at the fire.

'I come from Matamoras,' I answered, walking

up to the hearth, and placing my foot upon the fender.

'Hilloa!' cried another officer, catching a glimpse of my face. 'Why, it's my old friend, Captain A. Welcome, Captain; delighted to see you again!'

I shook hands with the speaker, in whom I recognised Lieutenant D., whose acquaintance I had made at Brownsville in the early part of the year.

'Why, man, how the deuce did you manage to get here?' continued my friend. 'We heard you were rubbed out, gone under, had your haar riz, as they say out West, in that rascally affair at Camargo.'

'I was there, 'tis true,' I replied; 'but I was only wounded and taken prisoner. Most of my unfortunate comrades, however, fell upon that disastrous day.'

'Draw up to the fire, Captain,' chimed in the landlord, a short corpulent fellow, with a foolish inquisitive face. 'Make yourself at home. Why, you're as wet as if you'd been dragged through the river. Throw on another log, Mary, and get some supper ready for the gentleman.'

'Now, tell us about Mexico and Maximilian,'

urged one of the Americans. 'What's the Emperor doing?'

'Making preparations to crush the Juarists at a blow,' I returned proudly. 'The French have only evacuated Monterey for strategic reasons; and Mejia is daily expected at Tampico, to drive Escobedo from the place.'

'Easier said than done, that, stranger, I calculate,' retorted the American. 'The Liberals arn't hunted down yet, as old Bazaine threatened.'

'And the two Emperors—Lewis Napoleon and Maximilian both—have got to find they've made their reck'nin' without the host,' added an American captain. 'The United States haven't spoken out in earnest yet. When they do, the Empire 'll collapse like a pricked soap-bubble.'

'Little doubt of that, I am afraid,' observed Lieut. C. 'If the United States interfere, poor Maximilian must go to the wall.'

'You don't seem to like the prospect, comrade?' said the captain.

'Who—I?' exclaimed my friend, finding it wise to dissimulate his real opinions. 'Only wait till our fellows come to blows with the Imperialists, and then see whether I like the Empire or not—that's all.'

'All right, comrade; I've seen you at work before, you know,' returned the American. 'I've not forgotten how your company behaved at Gettysburg. 'Twas as pretty a thing as I recollect to have seen—that rush up the hill, and capture of the Confederate battery.'

'Ah, that was very different fighting to Mexico, I suspect, A.,' said Lieutenant D., turning to me with a smile.

'True; but also very different men,' I replied.

The maid had laid the cloth during our conversation, but I cared for nothing but a cup of coffee; and, excusing myself upon the plea of fatigue, retired to rest.

The obliging landlady lent me a suit of her husband's clothes next morning while my own garments were being dried; but as he was short and stout, while I happen to be tall and thin, I cut rather a comical figure in my borrowed plumes.

Towards evening I rode over to Brownsville, and put up again at the St. Michael Hotel. I found the town filled with men of the Austrian Legion, who had succeeded in escaping from the hands of the Juarists, and got safely into the United States. The majority of these poor fellows were ill and in distress, and it was truly painful to

see the miserable figures that wandered about without resources or occupation, and unable to express their wants in the English tongue. The United States authorities behaved with much kindness. They assigned the destitute an old military hospital as a place of shelter, and allotted them a certain amount of rations daily.

It was, unfortunately, out of my power to give much assistance, for, owing to the absence of remittances from Europe, I was myself a good deal straitened. The sale of my horse produced but a small sum, so that I was compelled to leave the hotel, and avail myself of the friendly hospitality proffered by my friend Lieutenant D. at the negro camp. Little prospect seemed to present itself of returning to the Imperial army, as the French also abandoned Tampico almost immediately after evacuating Monterey.

A few of the legionaries were imprisoned in the hospital at Matamoras. A sergeant of the 2nd battalion, who had lost an arm at Camargo, and had afterwards been brought on to this place, had been most infamously neglected by the Mexican surgeons. So little attention was paid after the amputation to his wound—which proved difficult

to heal—that maggots actually made their appearance in the stump! In despair the poor fellow wrote the following appeal, which he bribed a Mexican—this venal race would sell their own mothers if they could find purchasers—to put into my hands:—

'Hospital de Villas, Matamoras:
'Nov. 12, 1866.

'Highly honoured Captain,

'Since the disastrous day of Camargo, I have manfully and patiently borne the cruel treatment of the Juarists, which has been carried on even in hospital. They use us like cattle, without having the humanity to put us to death.

'In the name of my comrades—Corporal S., 1st company, 2nd battalion; Private F., 1st company, 1st Jäger battalion; Sergeant H., 3rd company, 2nd Jäger battalion; and as belonging myself to the 2nd company, 2nd Jägèr battalion—I implore your honour to use every effort to deliver us out of the hands of these barbarians.

'With the deepest respect,

'Your honour's most obedient servant,

'F. M.'

Though I saw little hope of being able to comply with this poor fellow's petition, humanity urged me to try all I could to come to his assistance. I spoke to some of the American officers whom I knew to be well disposed towards the Imperialists, and they readily agreed to lend a helping hand. It was determined to hold a meeting that same night, to discuss the best means of proceeding.

The place where the meeting was held was a little church attached to the negro camp, built of reeds, and used solely for public worship by the blacks. It stood at a cross-road a trifling distance from the United States camp. The resolutions passed at the meeting were short, soldierly, and unanimous. The following night was appointed for the enterprise.

After the party separated, I was strolling through the moonlight towards the camp, when a hand suddenly clapped me from behind upon the shoulder. Turning in a second, I found myself, to my intense astonishment, face to face with Tomas de Leon!

'Am I never to get rid'—was the thought that flashed through my mind—'of this treacherous scoundrel and his connection with the Juarists?'

Measuring me with a keen and penetrating glance, the fellow seemed to divine my thoughts.

'You recollect me, Señor, do you not?' he asked.

'So far as I remember, I have only seen you once,' was my reply; 'and I did hope never to set eyes on you again.'

'I fully expected to find you among the suite of Canales,' answered the spy; 'but found I was mistaken. When I met you first, we were in the enemy's country. Had I then known who you were, I should have been only too happy to acquaint you'—here he stopped, and gazed cautiously round—'that I also am devoted to the Emperor's interests. Now that I have discovered your attachment to the same glorious cause, allow me to compliment you upon the cleverness with which you played the part of a Juarist officer.'

'Keep your distance, scoundrel!' I returned, sternly, laying my hand upon my revolver. 'Do you think I have forgotten your discourse in my presence with Señor Savedro, apparently as great a rascal as yourself? Depend upon it, I shall put the Emperor upon his guard against your treachery.'

Even by that insufficient light I saw a look of surprised concern pass over his countenance. But

he was far too shameless to be long abashed. He threw up his head with an air of affected indignation, and blustered out—

'Señor, your remarks are offensive and unjust!'

'A traitor and spy is a thing too contemptible for the treatment of a man of honour,' I retorted, 'otherwise you should give me instant satisfaction for your insolence. As it is, I repeat, I shall content myself with warning the Emperor's Government of your true character.'

'Do so, at your peril!' he replied, crossing his arms with matchless effrontery, and looking me steadily in the face. 'But if General Lopez does not receive the reports from the frontier I am sent to collect, and if the prisoners in Matamoras remain in captivity, yours will be the fault, remember —not mine.'

His impudence put a speedy end to my patience.

'Plausible as you are,' I cried angrily, 'you cannot lead me astray. Your character is clear to me, and shall speedily be shown to your employers. Now, begone! If I ever find you again lurking about this neighbourhood, I'll shoot you with as little remorse as I would a dog!'

I drew my revolver as I spoke, and presented it at his head. But the gesture was enough for

Tomas de Leon. He darted into the bushes, and instantly disappeared.

Still turning over in my mind the best means of carrying out the purpose we had in view for the succeeding night, I soon reached the camp, and went to my quarters.

CHAPTER XVI.

HELPING HANDS.

CHAPTER XVI.

LIEUTENANT D. had friends in Matamoras, to whom a Juarist sentinel sold the pass-word of the night for a piastre. This purchase materially lessened the difficulties of the enterprise.

Perfect quiet had prevailed in Brownsville for upwards of an hour, when a large boat, rowed by fishermen, carried us down the Rio Grande upon our mission of liberating the captives confined in Matamoras. Six men of the Austrian Legion under my command occupied the bow, while Lieutenant D., accompanied by three sergeants of his regiment and three American officers who had volunteered to join the expedition, sat in the stern—in all, fourteen resolute and determined men, armed with revolvers and sabres, and some carrying rifles in addition.

The boat rapidly descended the current, the silence being only broken by the dash of the oars,

and an occasional low direction of the steersman to the rowers. These men were all Mexicans. We had encountered much difficulty in persuading them, even for liberal pay, to risk secretly passing the enemy's outposts by night. It will easily be supposed that we had not disclosed the object of the expedition, but the men guessed our purpose was not friendly to their countrymen, and they looked upon their passengers with a very evil eye.

The boat glided easily on. The plashing of the waves and the monotonous beat of the oars cradled me at last in a kind of semi-slumber, in which dream was hardly distinguishable from reality. After some interval, it appeared to me as if the boat were being hurried away by the stream—at this point rapid and unruly—and no longer obeyed the impulse given by the helm. With the exception of a Hungarian sergeant, my companions had all fallen asleep. Lieutenant D. was snoring, with his head supported on the hilt of his sword. Before I had made up my mind what course to adopt, I heard one of the rowers say softly to his comrade:

'The Evil One has carried us into the stream. That comes of having the Imperialists on board.'

'Caracho los estranjeros!' broke in the steersman. 'A hundred times have I passed down the river, by night and in storm, and never failed to hit the right course.'

The boat began to swing round. A low cry rose from the rowers.

'Holy Virgin, pray for us!'

'Courage, lads!' exclaimed the steersman. 'We are not lost yet!'

I roused at this, and gazed around. To the left, the dark towers of the cathedral and the fortifications surrounding the town loomed through the darkness. This was the most critical point of the voyage. Supposing the fishermen now allowed the boat to drift under the left bank, we must infallibly fall into the enemy's hands. They seemed to have come to this determination, for the boat undoubtedly did incline towards that quarter.

I shook D., whispering, 'Rouse up! We are close to the town.'

D. sprang to his feet, and took in the position of affairs at a glance.

'To the right—the right, you rascal!' he exclaimed, in a tone of suppressed vehemence, drawing his sword, and setting the point at the

steersman's breast. 'Matamoras lies on that side. We never bargained with you to land us at Fort Imperator.'

'Gently, Señores, gently,' returned the steersman, considerably cowed. 'Matamoras and Fort Imperator are all the same.'

'To you, perhaps,' I remarked; 'but not for us. I did not choose to notice your threats and grumblings a little time back; but I tell you now that, at the least deviation from the proper course, the slightest noise to catch the attention of the guards upon the bank, that instant I send a bullet through your head!'

The steersman and his comrades did not venture to reply, but guided the boat close under the right bank, until we arrived opposite the garden of the hospital. Here the party landed, leaving two men behind to watch the rowers, and cautiously approached the hospital gates.

Much to our disappointment, we noticed that a guard was posted in front of the building. We were forced, therefore, to abandon our attempt to get in unperceived; and D. and I undertook the task of entering the hospital by passing the guard, intending to make our escape with the prisoners through a postern at some little distance in the

garden wall. The rest of the party were to keep out of sight of the sentries, but to hold themselves ready to come to our assistance if required.

These arrangements concluded, D. and I marched boldly up to the gates. The sentry challenged, D. gave the word, and we gained admission without difficulty.

I should have mentioned before, that by means of the universal Mexican panacea—a few piastres—we had already secured a coadjutor in the interior of the place. D.'s friends had bribed the jailor, José—once possibly a tolerable soldier, but now body and soul the devoted slave of muscal—to give us any assistance we required.

D. knocked gently at the little side-door leading to the jailor's quarters.

'Who's there?' stuttered a hoarse voice from within after a lengthy pause. 'Friend or enemy?'

'Amigo, old drunkard!' whispered D. angrily. 'Have you forgotten your promise to Señor M.?'

At this appeal the door was slowly opened. José put forth a drink-soddened face, out of which glowed a fiery and pimpled nose, the whole surmounted by a tall grey nightcap. He held up a lantern suspiciously, to see who it was that demanded entrance.

'Quick, quick!' exclaimed my comrade as we slipped past. 'You know me of old. Where are the prisoners?'

I quickened the jailor's perceptions with half a dozen piastres, upon which his fingers closed mechanically.

'This way, Señores,' exclaimed José, bustling forward. 'Please to step this way.'

Entering his room, we found the table occupied by a large bottle of muscal, for whose presence he apologised, declaring it had been left there by mistake over-night.

While José and Lieutenant D. went off to liberate the prisoners, I had an opportunity of inspecting his quarters by the moonlight that streamed in through the window.

A green woollen curtain hung in front of his sleeping apartment. The whitewashed walls were covered with grotesque charcoal sketches, evidently the work of no unpractised hand. Many represented José in various stages of his career. In one place he was standing with a huge bunch of keys in his hand, ordering prisoners into confinement; in another, he was depicted with a muscal bottle tipped high up in the air, and the mouth glued to his lips. Further on, the artist had

drawn a number of Juarist soldiers flying from a single heroic Imperialist, and leaving all their baggage behind in their alarm. Close beside José's portraits hung his broad Mexican sabre and enormous wide-brimmed sombrero.

I was still inspecting the jailor's household gods, when I suddenly heard a door, leading from the hospital to the prisoners' quarters, thrown violently open. Loud voices and the tread of armed men approached the ante-room. The tones of one of the speakers sent a thrill through my nerves, for I at once recognised the voice of Tomas de Leon. Discovery was death. Obeying the instincts of that discretion which is said to be the better part of valour, I lost no time in creeping under José's truckle-bed, and had only just ensconced myself in my concealment when the jailor entered with Tomas de Leon and the officer of the guard.

'So everything is in order, José?' asked the officer.

'Si, Señor, as ever,' returned José, with an unblushing face.

'No alarm been given?' pursued the querist.

'Not a mouse has popped its head out of a hole, to my knowledge,' was José's reply.

'It is well,' returned the officer. Then drawing

José on one side, close to the spot where I lay, he continued :—'Mind, for your own sake, keep careful and attentive watch, as befits an old soldier. Remember, the slightest negligence will draw down severe punishment. Think less of that comrade of yours there'—he pointed to the bottle—'and more of your charge. I rely upon your watchfulness.'

As the officer and his companion left the room, I heard Tomas de Leon say :—

'They will most likely put off the attempt for a day or two, as I met the Imperialist officer who is to be their leader yesterday.'

'So much the better,' returned the officer. 'We must try and prepare a warm reception for them when they do pay us a visit.'

Their steps died away in the distance, and I emerged from my hiding-place, congratulating myself upon my escape from this unforeseen danger.

A few minutes afterwards, José and Lieutenant D. came back with the prisoners. Time did not permit of our allowing the poor fellows to express their gratitude at the near prospect of release. To evade the threatened punishment, José begged leave to accompany us to Brownsville, until the

recollection of his delinquency had blown over; and at my intercession, D. granted his request.

The entire party therefore at once proceeded cautiously through the shrubbery in the garden to the postern, which opened upon the road leading to the river, where our friends were in waiting. We had just crossed the threshold when a shot was fired, and signals of alarm immediately rang out.

Nothing but rapid action could save us now. Lieutenant D. fired his revolver in the direction whence the shot had come, but received no reply. Joining our comrades outside, we all set off at double-quick for the bank, reached the boat in safety, and pushed out into the stream.

The entire garrison was on the alert; alarm signals were continually given; rockets shot up into the air; bullets spattered into the water beside the boat, and splashed its occupants, but no one was hurt. Anxiety for the safety of their own skins converted the boatmen—previously our secret enemies—into staunch and firm allies. The fellows bent to their oars with a will, and sent the boat hissing along the stream.

'Put your backs into it, lads! Let her spin!' cried Lieutenant D. ''Tis your interest as well

as ours now. Let 'em spend their fire as much as they please. We are out of range.'

A few minutes afterwards our keel grated upon the strand. The news of our expedition had got wind, and a crowd of sympathising friends—attracted by the firing—cheered us heartily as we brought our prizes on shore.

The poor fellows we had luckily succeeded in rescuing thanked their preservers warmly with tears in their eyes. Similarly to the other men of the Legion, they were housed and fed at the cost of the American authorities.

Shortly after this occurrence, I left Brownsville with the relics of the Austrian Legion, to take ship at Brazos-Santiago for New Orleans, hoping then to get an opportunity of returning to the Imperial army. The kindness of the authorities in the Gulf Department granted us a free passage on board the steamer 'Morgan,' and the weather was so favourable that in three days after leaving Brazos we ran into New Orleans harbour.

CHAPTER XVII.

ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD.

CHAPTER XVII.

NOTHING detained me in New Orleans to prevent my carrying out my design of returning to the Imperial army. Fortune proved favourable to my wishes, for a few days after our arrival the French despatch-boat 'Sonora' put in to New Orleans harbour from Vera Cruz.

I had no difficulty in obtaining a passage for myself and the other men of the Legion, as I had known the captain of the steamer previously at Tampico. The 'Sonora' left New Orleans two days afterwards, and I had a second opportunity of admiring the splendid scenery of the Mississippi. The weather was magnificent, and we ran into Vera Cruz harbour at five A.M., the fifth day after our departure.

My first glance fell upon the still slumbering city, lying before me, lighted by the first beams of the early sun. Yes; this was indeed the land of Mexico, and with every sense I eagerly drank in

the beauties of the unequalled scene. At some distance off lay the lovely island of Santa Crucifix, rising out of the clear blue waters of the Gulf like a glimpse of paradise.*

We were all anxious and impatient to land, but, owing to the prevalence of cholera, were compelled to remain in quarantine outside the harbour. The three days appointed for this purpose passed all the more wearily because we were confined to the cabin by the stormy *del norte*.

Among the numerous vessels forced to seek shelter within the harbour was an Egyptian war-steamer, which had brought African soldiers to the lowlands of Mexico in compliance with a hint from the astute Napoleon. We lay alongside, and I seized the opportunity of going over the ship. As there was ample time before the boat by which we were to land should be ready, Lieutenant Liveron, of the 'Sonora,' accompanied me on

* About a thousand paces from Vera Cruz, which extends close along the shores of the Gulf, lies the fort, the guns of which command the harbour, and in Santa Anna's time were employed to bombard the town. This armament would, however, be useless against modern projectiles. Similarly to Havana, Vera Cruz has been fortified by the Spaniards in the ancient style, with ramparts and bastions. Its situation is unhealthy: yellow fever is an annual visitant, regularly carrying off large numbers.

board. The captain of the vessel was an Egyptian, trained for the service in France, and only the chief engineer was an Englishman. All the crew consisted of swarthy Egyptians or coal-black Abyssinians.

The long, slight-limbed, dark figures, wearing nothing but a thin pair of drawers, ran nimbly about the deck. It happened to be washing-day, and the men skimmed rapidly up the shrouds and along the spars, now bearing shirts and trowsers in place of waving flags. A singular picture was presented by these half-naked fellows, and the few superior officers scattered at intervals along the deck, lying upon cushions with true Oriental composure, lazily emitting an occasional puff of smoke from the long pipe-sticks in their mouths, and gazing out over the sea. The band struck up as we were leaving the ship, producing a remarkable *pot-pourri* of tunes and instruments, anything but gratifying to the ear.

We landed shortly afterwards at the Molo, and I marched my men to the Prefecto Politico of Vera Cruz, to make arrangements for transport to Puebla. This matter was settled without difficulty. The returned soldiers of the Legion received rations, and left for Puebla under escort of

a corporal, while I remained a few days in Vera Cruz.

It is interesting to notice in this town how the position of the great houses and the convents has changed with the altered habits of the Spanish grandees. At the period when the aristocracy still carried on trade, the princely Spanish merchants built their dwellings facing the sea. The palace on the Plaza, the Grand Hôtel Diligente, and other buildings, owe their origin to that golden age.

Everywhere in Mexico the observer finds among the people the consciousness of brand-new civilisation grafted upon an important but forgotten past. They have nothing to tell but a few exaggerated stories of the Spanish times; they know the names, and are familiar with the exploits, of a few who have distinguished themselves; and that is all.

At Vera Cruz I had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with Mexico as it really is. The progress and trade that had begun since the establishment of the Empire were plainly visible. All the improvements for the prosperity and welfare of the people showed that the Emperor Maximilian in every respect understood the wants and political desires of the great body of the nation. The plain-

ness of his external appearance, the strictness of his morals, and his unobtrusive bravery had gained him universal esteem among the Mexicans favourable to the Empire, and this was further increased by the undeviating impartiality he displayed towards all classes. His kindness of heart and chivalrous politeness ameliorated the severity of the decrees and sentences issued by Marshal Bazaine against the Juarists—those very men who afterwards murdered him upon that especial pretext. He took indescribable pains to bring the discordant elements into agreement.

Between the Imperial and the Juarist party there existed a third—that of Santa Anna, which agitated against both the others under the protection of the United States. Under these circumstances the stand-point of the Imperial Government was extremely difficult; every town and every rancho had to be conquered *seriatim*.

Vera Cruz was thronged with French troops, under orders to return to France, and waiting here to embark. But the 'Sonora' brought despatches from the Emperor Napoleon, which changed their destination, and the major portion had to return discontentedly to their respective garrisons in the interior.

Upon my arrival here I met General Count Th., commandant of the Imperial Legion, who had resigned his position in the army, and was returning to Austria. His departure called forth extreme bitterness among the officers of the Imperial Legion.

It was impossible not to perceive that the Emperor would have great difficulty in maintaining his authority after the departure of the French. The affairs of his government were undoubtedly in a serious position, especially as it had next to no finances in hand: added to this, came the fact that the administration was excessively irregular, for Mexican honesty is rather more than questionable.

Yet none of these considerations could alter my decision to rejoin the army. I furnished myself with a complete outfit, and left Vera Cruz by railway upon the 15th January, 1867, to report myself as fit for service, having returned from imprisonment.

As we quitted the town, the natural beauties of the country were seen on every side. Every flat-roofed wayside house, every palm-tree, every sun-burned face was hailed like an old acquaintance. The ruins of an ancient convent peeped down upon

us every now and then from the wooded heights on either side of the line. From time to time we passed detached forts, built to protect the railway, and mostly garrisoned by Egyptians.

We reached Paso del Macho about eight P.M. The railway was only finished up to this point, and the journey to Puebla and the metropolis had to be completed by diligence.

I was heartily glad to exchange the uncomfortable railway carriage with the inn. This hostelry was the type of a wretched Mexican fonda—a fact I scarcely noticed at the time, as I had made acquaintance with far inferior taverns in Southern Mexico, where comfort had nevertheless been found. Dirty rooms stretched upon all sides round the spacious court-yard, crowded with waggons and carts, and thronged by a noisy quarrelsome squad of stable-helpers, postilions, and mules. The guest-rooms held numbers of fowls seeking shelter from the rain, and who were treated by the hostess with fully as much consideration as the customers, in their quality of privileged inmates. Yet, notwithstanding the unclean cloths upon the long tables, the great rickety chairs, and the surly faces of the people at the inn, the company grew merry after some good soup, with cheese and maccaroni,

and several roast fowls, had revived their drooping frames. Upon the appearance of every fresh bird, that disappeared before the appetites of the hungry travellers, I could not help gazing with an air of triumph at the living fowls hopping, with true Mexican impudence, about our legs, and thinking, 'Jump away! your hour will strike; and when we have left, others will revenge us by devouring you.' Then I was forced to laugh at myself. It was but a paltry vengeance I anticipated, after all.

The diligence was ready to leave at three, although four was the hour printed upon the bills. For economy's sake I had taken my seat upon the box, but soon had occasion to discover the discomforts of an outside passage.

Our conveyance was a strong unwieldy vehicle, drawn by sixteen or seventeen mules, at which I was nowise astonished afterwards, when I came to see the abominable almost impassable road. Two men were necessary to keep this extensive team in order. One managed the reins, and the other manipulated the whip, the thong of which not being long enough to flick the foremost mule into propriety, its holder was provided with a bagful of sharp, unpleasant little stones, with which

he administered due castigation to the leader when required.

The diligence left Paso del Macho punctually at three o'clock. The stars twinkled brightly in the sky, and the full moon cast her pale soft light upon the scene. The road wound slowly upwards past lofty, jagged mountain peaks, through ravines, and over heights. The entire landscape lay wrapped in the deepest stillness below. The roughness of the road necessitated the precaution of sitting firm and abstaining from sleep. Many a heedless traveller, overcome by drowsiness, has lost his hold, and, falling, met an instantaneous death.

We had been about a couple of hours upon the road, when grey dawn was succeeded by a bright and sunny day, and looking back across the windings of the way, we saw far behind us the still slumbering town, veiled in the morning mist. As the diligence could only proceed slowly, the passengers had alighted, and were climbing the pass on foot, to enjoy the mountain air. The quiet, the utter absence of sound at such elevations, always has a magical charm for those whose ears are used to the buzz and rattle of the life of towns. Farther away, and growing smaller as the

distance constantly increased, we could still see Paso del Macho at intervals from the winding road. When the diligence had gained the top of the pass, the passengers resumed their seats, and, guided with astonishing precision, the cumbrous vehicle rolled rapidly downwards over the great boulders scattered upon the road, with occasional jolts and bumps that made one shudder. Reaching level ground, we noticed upon both sides of the road pleasant-looking villas peep forth from surrounding fruit-gardens and from the dark-green foliage of orange and lemon trees. Carts drawn by mules, harnessed tandem fashion, drove slowly past. We met priests riding upon asses, or sitting upon rocks by the roadside, chatting confidentially with the country folks in the secure quiet of accustomed respect. Huge trees formed a primeval forest on either side the highway, over which Orizaba showed his glittering cap of snow in the distance high above the clouds. It was ten in the evening before we reached Purtrero, where we changed our team.

The 81st French Infantry, which had bivouacked in the vicinity of Purtrero, started for Cordova simultaneously with ourselves. The regimental

baggage waggons had already been sent forward under a weak escort.

Besides myself, the travellers by the diligence were a young Mexican Donna with her maid, two Mexican officers, and a Frenchman. The latter—a handsome well-grown man, and an artist by profession—was a pleasant and interesting companion. He looked rather pale, and his eyes appeared to me weakly. Mentioning this to him, he told me he had strained his sight too much by working at night. He spoke of his professional travels in Egypt and Italy with touching simplicity. Through all his observations was visible the fresh sound sense of a man reared in humble circumstances, and in constant communion with Nature, who surveys the world and humankind through the medium of a healthy judgment, and not through the opaque spectacles of conventional prejudice. The other travellers kept themselves aloof, and did not seem particularly interesting; I therefore made no attempt to enter into conversation with them.

We drove on slowly in the most agreeable humour, when suddenly some arrieros, seized with a panic, came galloping towards us with the

cry of 'Guerillas!' Our postilions instantly pulled up. Notwithstanding the badness of the road, our diligence must have been proceeding at a tolerably rapid pace, for we had left the French troops, who marched at the same time as we did, far behind. We looked to our revolvers, and made ready for a fight. I, for my part, had firmly determined to defend my baggage and myself.

At this moment eight French soldiers fortunately came up, who had kept step with the diligence unperceived. These good fellows at once prepared for battle. A little distance in front fell a few shots, and at the same instant some eight or ten guerillas galloped towards the diligence with drawn sabres. I had descended from my seat and posted myself by the baggage. A bullet whizzed close by my ear, and the struggle began. We should undoubtedly have got the worst of it but for the timely arrival of the French. As it was, the fighting power of these auxiliaries turned the scale in our favour. Two of the guerillas were killed, and several wounded. To the general regret, the French painter was touched by a bullet in the left arm, but not severely. The other travellers had sought safety in the thickets at the

side of the wood before the skirmish began. They now put in an appearance, and the diligence lumbered slowly on.

We only stopped long enough at our next halting-place to get some refreshment, and then proceeded. Immediately after leaving, we perceived the extent of the damage really done by the guerillas. Four or five of the French baggage waggons had been plundered and robbed of their teams. Red pantaloons, cartridges, and various other stores lay strewn about the road. Mounted infantry had been detached from Cordova in pursuit of the robbers, and had recovered a portion of the stolen effects and teams. They also brought in some of the guerillas with their ears cut off. Being Egyptians, it seems the pursuers had treated their prisoners after the custom of their own country.

I reached Puebla in safety the third day after my departure from Vera Cruz. Here I found myself surrounded entirely by strange officers; but although previously unacquainted, we were yet brothers in point of language, and I soon made many friends.

Puebla is very much like all other Mexican

towns, and still showed evident traces of the French bombardment under Marshal Bazaine.

Upon reporting myself at head-quarters, my name was entered upon the service list, whereupon I got a month's leave, and set out to visit the capital.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LOPEZ AND HIS ALLY.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CITY OF MEXICO lies in a hollow surrounded by hills. Although the pride of the Mexicans, it certainly does not justify the reputation it has acquired. However great its former glory may have been, it now presents the appearance of a *passé* beauty tricked out in rags. The streets are dirty, the houses tumbledown, ruinous, and poverty-stricken, and the inhabitants for the most part unclean. I could overlook the entire city from my windows in the great Hôtel de l'Europe, formerly a castle, in which the majority of the French officers had quartered themselves at the expense of the Imperial Government.

Immediately after my arrival I endeavoured to obtain an audience of the Emperor, to acquaint his Majesty with the sad fate of my comrade in escaping the Juarist imprisonment. I did not succeed, being informed that the Emperor had been working with the State Minister for several

days. That this was actually the case was confirmed by a note from a French general, who had also asked for an audience, but was forced to content himself with a similar reply.

In order to pass the evening pleasantly, I went to Tivoli, where the Imperial band gave a concert. Besides many officers with whom I was not acquainted, I met one old companion in arms who had served with me in the United States during the late war. This was Prince S.-S., who had visited Tivoli with his wife. In their society I passed a really agreeable evening, and we did not separate until long after the concert was at an end.

I had ample opportunity to make acquaintance with the Emperor's suite, having business of various kinds to transact, first with one and then with another of these gentlemen. I took especial pains to call the attention of the Imperial Government to one Tomas de Leon—a spy in the service of General Lopez—as a man I could prove to be a traitor. All my attempts however failed, owing to the influence and high favour which Lopez enjoyed with the Emperor, causing my information to appear almost a kind of sacrilege. No weight was attached to my accusations.

The Emperor knew that strong party spirit reigned among his adherents, even among the military, and his constant endeavour to keep all factions in check was one of the most arduous duties of his administration. The unreliability of his ministers and councillors obstructed his efforts all the more, because he could not detect the offenders. Rumours and warnings had aroused suspicion and brought about arrests and examinations, but without leading to any results. His honest heart would not believe in the treachery of those nearest to his person, although circumstances clearly pointing to its existence were of constant occurrence. There was, however, one officer in the Imperial army whose penetrating intellect, whose prudence, and whose invincible fidelity did good service to the Emperor. This was Mejia.

Mejia was a born Mexican, upon whom nature had conferred great gifts. As a soldier he distinguished himself by foresight, bravery, and talent. He possessed a ready eloquence, which he directed against republican institutions, and which gained him universal applause. To the simplicity of a child he united the easy self-possession of the man of the world and the firmness of character of a

soldier. He was a most energetic defender of the Imperial interests; indefatigable in his undertakings, immovable in determination, strict and friendly, jocular and serious, yet ever natural.

Through him I obtained an audience of the State Minister, to whom I communicated what I knew about Tomas de Leon.

'I am acquainted with your report already,' said the minister, the moment I entered his room.

'Your Excellency, that is impossible,' I replied, curtly. 'No one can have given you the details of my report upon Tomas de Leon, because I have never entrusted them to anybody.'

'Have you any positive fact to bring forward against the man?' asked the minister, impatiently.

'Undoubtedly, or I would not have troubled your Excellency.'

'Go on, then—I shall not interrupt you,' was the sarcastic reply.

Nowise discouraged, I related my accidental meeting with Tomas de Leon, together with that individual's conversation with Señor Savedro, which had completely convinced me of his treachery towards the Imperial Government.

'Nothing more?' asked the minister, laconically.

'Well, no, your Excellency,' I replied, in a tone of annoyance; 'but I beg to suggest that I have already said enough to be of material interest to the Imperial Government.'

'Well, well,' was the answer; 'I shall lay the matter before the Emperor, but General Lopez must be consulted before anything can be done.'

Wherewith I was bowed out.

Curiously enough, a circumstance happened shortly afterwards, tending strongly to confirm the misgivings I had already expressed.

The officers in garrison at Mexico had organised a grand masquerade in Tivoli, to be followed by a supper lasting till midnight, after which dancing was to recommence. An officer stood at the entrance of the ball-room, to whom each masquer whispered his name, and was thereupon admitted; the object being to allow everyone to participate who could lay claim to be considered an honest man. The splendour and expense of the costume afforded sufficient guarantee that so-called 'plebeians' would not attempt to intrude.

The last candle had been lighted in the grand saloon, and the glare of the illumination streamed out through the lofty arched windows into the leafy avenues of the opposite park. The Imperial

band was gathering in an adjoining room, to prepare for the brilliant evening. Though not one of the promoters of the affair, I had, of course, received an invitation, and had gone down early to watch the arrival of the guests. The grand saloon soon began to fill with the handsomest and most original costumes. The trumpets sounded the invitation to dance; the ladies ranged themselves in line upon one side, the gentlemen upon the other, and the festivities began.

Not being a dancer, I had withdrawn with a friend, Lieutenant F., of the Volunteer Imperial Uhlans, into the recess of one of the windows, and was watching the variegated throng, when my eye fell upon a male mask, engaged in apparently earnest conversation with another, just opposite to us. A strange feeling of distrust crept over me as I fancied I recognised the small glittering eyes shining through the apertures in the sable vizor.

Excusing myself to my friend, I went to the officer of the Arrangement Committee on duty, and begged him to let me inspect the book containing the list of the guests. I was on the point of handing it back to him, when my attention was suddenly attracted by the name, 'L. de

Tomas,' and the peculiar hand in which it was written. The idea instantly flashed across me that name and writing belonged to the traitor Tomas de Leon, whom I fancied I had recognised just before.

I returned to the ball-room to have a second examination of the suspicious mask, and, if requisite, to convince myself of the truth or falsehood of its identity by force. But presently another masked figure stepped up to the first, and this circumstance converted my doubts into conviction, for I recognised the new-comer as Señor Lopez. The air of confidential intimacy with which this personage greeted Tomas de Leon only strengthened my opinion that these two scoundrels were availing themselves of the masquerade to discuss their schemes unperceived.

At the moment when the trumpets gave the signal for unmasking, the confederates left the ball-room, and I followed them into the darkness and quiet of the park. They passed rapidly through one of the long avenues of trees, at the end of which they entered a summer-house. Cautiously and noiselessly, I followed them unperceived to the door, holding my cocked revolver ready in my hand, but upon reaching the entrance I found it closed.

Deep silence lay over the entire scene. The summer-house was too remote from the ball-room to allow the gay notes of the orchestra to penetrate so far. I glided quietly round the building, and observed an opening in the wall large enough to admit a man with ease. Without a moment's hesitation, I slipped through, and found myself in a dark passage. Groping around the walls, I soon came to a doorway. A narrow ray of light, stealing through the partially open door, guided me to a spot whence I could look into the adjoining room. Here I plainly recognised both the men of whom I was in search, by the faint beams of a taper placed upon the floor.

'Well,' asked Lopez, 'how do matters stand? Does the cause prosper? Do they agree in our views?'

'Fully, Señor,' replied Tomas de Leon. 'No one doubts of the speedy fall of the Empire, now that the French have left. Los estranjeros must be massacred to a man.'

'Good,' was the cold-blooded reply. 'We must serve the Emperor so long as anything is to be got out of him; then let him go with the rest. As for Mejia, that scoundrel!' cried Lopez wildly, 'he shall not fall in obscurity, in the darkness of

night, by the dagger or by the sword. No! he shall perish publicly, in the face of day; die like a traitor by the bullets of the patriots.'

'Yes, Señor,' chimed in Tomas de Leon quickly. 'Depend upon me for that. You will not find me deficient in zeal.'

Lopez gazed at his instrument with evident admiration of his enthusiasm.

'I have one thing more to mention, Señor,' De Leon continued. 'I have already told you that I accidentally met a confounded Imperial officer, who managed to escape by stratagem out of his imprisonment by the Juarists. Well, I have come across him again here. I should particularly like to have that dog's life, before I rejoin the Republican party.'

Listeners proverbially never hear any good of themselves. I was no exception to the rule. It was as much as I could do to keep myself from rushing in upon this precious pair, and in my excitement I stamped my foot violently upon the floor. I recollected myself, however, in an instant.

'Hark! Did you hear nothing?' whispered Lopez, looking timidly round.

'Not a sound.'

'Really—nothing?' repeated the traitor, sending his gaze into every cranny of the apartment. 'It seemed to me almost as if——. Pray heaven we haven't spoken too loud. Surely no one can have followed us into this remote place. Come, let us search.'

He pushed the taper into Tomas de Leon's hand, and the two went out by an opposite door.

I hurried back the same way that I had entered, and plunged into an adjoining thicket. Here I thought it prudent to remain for a considerable time, so that it was not until some hours afterwards that I crossed the dewy turf of the park upon my road home. The lights in Tivoli windows were all extinguished when I went past, and profound silence now reigned where but a few hours previously all had been hilarity and excitement. Wrapping myself in my cloak, for the morning air was keen, I soon succeeded in reaching my hotel.

The interview of these two traitors had not sufficiently acquainted me with their exact plans to do more than corroborate my previous suspicions. But it was abundantly clear that intrigues, and those of a most dangerous character, against the Imperial Government were being carried on.

Yet of what avail was anything that I could say? I knew but too well that the Emperor was surrounded by a set of plotting eye-servants, and that hardly one among his entire suite was true to him, except the foreign officers. Still I did what I could. I informed Prince S.-S. of the meeting of Lopez and Tomas de Leon, and he promised me to lay the matter before his Majesty.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN COMMAND.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE possibility of maintaining the authority of the Imperial Government grew constantly more difficult after the departure of the French. Under the existing circumstances of the Empire, many officers of the foreign legions left to return to Europe. My company could no longer be got together in its normal strength. For this reason, and in order at least to get back to active service, I accepted the command of a detachment of Contra-guerillas. This was a position coupled with the greatest hazard, but that was no matter. The post was suitable to the claims I then put forward, and I entered without hesitation upon my new career.

The Imperial Contra-guerillas were intended to put a stop to the exploits of the Juarist robbers, and to infuse respect and obedience into the inhabitants of Southern Mexico hostile to the Imperial Government. But the Imperial Contra-

guerillas also enjoyed another privilege in the eyes of the Juarists over all other branches of the service. This was, to be hanged, when captured, without trial or mercy.

The detachment I had to command was at Vera Cruz, and I consequently went thither a few days after my appointment. Preparations were made for a descent upon Acapulco, situated on the shore of the Pacific, some eight leagues from Vera Cruz. It was decided that the expedition should pass through the State of Tuxpan, in order to drive away the guerillas, who were interrupting the construction of a horse-railway leading from Vera Cruz to Acapulco.

Telegrams were received in Vera Cruz the evening before we marched, announcing that the Emperor had quitted the capital at the head of his army, and was advancing to give battle to the Juarists upon the Rio de San Juan.

At about three A.M. the following morning I set forth with my detachment, consisting of some fifty Germans, French, and Belgians. The sun beat down upon our heads with almost unbearable fury. We passed through woods so close and thickly grown that we could hardly force our horses between the trees, alternating with dense brushwood

and stiff thicket. Our way led across the mountains.

I was riding in advance with a few of the men, when a number of Juarist guerillas suddenly swept upon us, cut down one of the men before he had time to draw his sabre in defence, and seized the reins of our horses. I instantly sprang from the saddle, followed by my men, and a sharp contest began, in which we should undoubtedly have been worsted but for the prompt arrival of the rest of the detachment to our aid. The robbers were overpowered, although one of their number still held three of my people in check by his skill in swordsmanship. Hurrying up to their assistance, I recognised an American in the bold and resolute partisan. A shot from my revolver stretched him on the ground. In searching his pockets, I found a letter from the Juarist General Pedro Parando in Acapulco, who was informed of our approach; but nothing else of a suspicious character. Leaving the dead where they lay, we continued our march.

About a week after our departure from Vera Cruz, we arrived at Jalapa. The men found themselves quarters, and made themselves comfortable after the hardships of their long march.

I took up my residence at an hotel, and made an excursion after supper through the town, to gain a tolerable knowledge of its position. This was a highly necessary precaution in a strategic point of view, to prevent our being taken by surprise by one of the sudden attacks to which guerillas are so much addicted.

Confidence in the Imperial Government continued rapidly to decline among the people. The scale of power in the Imperial and Juarist balance steadily and regularly inclined to the side of the latter, which was also favoured by the United States. Despite these unpromising circumstances, the Imperial troops remained full of hope in the eventual triumph of the good cause.

We had not been many days in Jalapa before an Imperial spy brought in news that General Diaz, with his army corps, had cut off connection with the metropolis. My detachment was therefore altogether isolated. This circumstance did not, however, prevent me from determining to pursue my march, and to steer straight ahead for Acapulco.

The States of Vera Cruz, Mazatlan, and Tuxpan were now pretty well cleared of guerillas, but we knew that most of these gentry had withdrawn in

the direction of Acapulco, most probably to unite there with the main body.

One evening I was returning from a reconnoissance round the town. Busied in thought, and not sufficiently acquainted with the devious paths I was pursuing, I managed somehow to miss me way. I was just outside a dirty-looking farm, when I discovered this bit of ill-luck. While I gazed around in the hope of discovering some object with which I was familiar, I heard a confused tumult at a little distance on my right. I listened. The sounds grew plainer. I could distinguish men's voices, shouting loudly one against the other; the moment after, I heard screams. Although not attaching much importance to the squabble, I thought I might as well see what it was all about. I rode forwards, and reached a large square house, whence the screams proceeded. Just as I was coming up, a window was torn open, and a female voice shrieked for help.

'What is the matter?' I shouted.

'Whoever you are, save us, save us!' exclaimed the voice. 'And that this moment, or we shall all be murdered!'

Nothing more was said, but the clash of swords became plainly audible. Dismounting, I knocked

and kicked at the doors; I called, but got no answer. The noise within seemed to increase. To the left of the house I observed a passage, at the entrance to which stood a Mexican woman.

'How can I get into the house?' I asked.

'Better leave them to fight it out,' was the cool reply. 'Those in there are not the first, by many, whose throats they've cut.'

'What! Are the inmates in such bad repute?'

'Ay, that are they. Why, there's nobody there but Juarist guerillas and spies, and their women, and they're quarrelling about sharing the booty—that's all. Now to-day it's worse than usual, because they've got the guerilla chief, Don Garcia, with them—him that's murdered so many of those poor foreigners.'

The woman turned away, but she had mentioned a name that lived in my memory. This Don Garcia had been a discarded suitor to a bride of my friend Eugene von L., and had sworn deadly revenge. Without further delay, I sprang into the saddle, and galloped at full speed to fetch reinforcement.

When I returned, I found the screams and tumult above still going on. Leaving one of the men with the horses, and taking the Mexican

woman as guide, we entered the house. Followed by my people, I ascended a dark narrow staircase, the row growing in vehemence as we drew nearer to the scene of action, and arrived at a door, throwing open which we beheld a spectacle not easily forgotten.

The centre of the room was occupied by a table still bearing wine-bottles and the relics of a meal. Arms and other objects were strewn in wild confusion about the floor. Two guerillas were hacking and stabbing desperately at a third member of the band, who skilfully parried all their attacks. Two Mexican girls, whose appearance betrayed their calling, were clinging to an officer in the Juarist uniform, who had taken refuge behind an immense arm-chair, turned legs upwards, probably in the course of the *mêlée*. The officer was keeping at arm's length a savage, brigand-like-looking rascal, who was trying to achieve the impossible feat of doing two things at a time. The brigand was attempting to pull away the protecting chair with his left hand, while he ran his opponent through with his right. But this was just the difficulty. Whenever the brigand stooped to pick up the chair, the officer thrust furiously at him across his barricade, and with such evident venom

that, had his sword-arm not been hampered by the clinging figures of the screaming baggages at his side, the Juarist would probably long since have sent his antagonist to Hades. The other side of the room was enlivened by a pretty little combat of one guerilla against two others—a companion picture to the engagement in progress nearer the door: in this case also the single champion was a better swordsman than his opponents, so that the sides were pretty evenly matched.

A rapid glance over the field gathered in all these details in a trice. As words would have been clearly thrown away—even if they could have been heard at all in such a clatter—my men and I struck in at once between the combatant guerillas. Our sudden appearance, and more than all the Imperial uniform, created such a panic that all threw away their arms and begged for mercy.

'Time for that has expired!' was my reply. 'You should have made your submission within the period fixed by the Emperor's proclamation. I shall deliver you all over to the Prefecto Politico at Vera Cruz. Which of you is called Don Garcia?'

The captured robbers looked at each other open

mouthed, and one of them pointed mutely to the window. Don Garcia had escaped.

As I was escorting the captured Juarists to head-quarters, I was met by a courier from the Imperialist General (Miramon) with a despatch. It was as follows:—

'Head-quarters of the Second Division,
'near Queretaro, March 10, 1867.

'You are hereby informed that the Imperial army has left for San Luis Potosi, under the command of His Majesty the Emperor. You are therefore ordered to join the main body by forced marches, as speedily as circumstances shall permit.

'MIRAMON,
'Commanding General.'

The escort I had sent on with the captured guerillas to Vera Cruz returned, and I set out with my detachment. I took a guide with me in order to reach the vicinity of Acapulco by unfrequented paths. The march was conducted without interruption, although we were once near coming in contact with the vedettes of the hostile cavalry.

CHAPTER XX.

TOMAS DE LEON.

CHAPTER XX.

WE ARRIVED before Acapulco about ten in the evening, after a five days' march from Jalapa. I thought it advisable to quarter my men in a small adjacent rancho, while I ascertained the strength of General Paranda's force before attacking. The roads leading to the town were blocked, and spies sent out that same night. The report they brought back was encouraging. Paranda occupied the town with only twenty-five men. This intelligence determined me to push forward without delay.

At nine next morning I rode into Acapulco at the head of my detachment, to the great surprise of the inhabitants. Paranda drew off his men without opposition and without firing a shot, and I took undisturbed possession of this nest of guerillas.

Acapulco contains nearly 6,000 inhabitants, is

situated upon the Pacific, and is surrounded upon the land side by heights in all directions, so that the town lies in the lap of mountains. With a small and determined garrison it might easily bid defiance to the attacks of a vastly superior force.

I took up my abode in the apartments which had served as Paranda's head-quarters, and the Imperial flag was hoisted upon the building. I immediately sent a courier to General Miramon to report the capture of the town, and ask for further orders.

Several vessels lay in the harbour, among them being the American steamer 'Mexico.' The captain was an old and intimate acquaintance, and we passed several pleasant days together.

The intelligence that General Diaz had successfully repulsed the Imperial General Mejia, and had detached a corps to Acapulco, caused me to move out of the town at midnight upon the 1st of April, even before instructions had been received from General Miramon. I could not risk being entirely cut off from the main body, especially as a strong detachment of Juarist guerillas obstructed my retreat upon Vera Cruz. My chief apprehension was lest Diaz, learning my isolated position, should

throw himself upon me with his entire force in order to annihilate my small command at a blow.

We had already marched on unhindered for several hours, when some of my men who had ridden in advance came hurriedly back with the report that a detachment of Juarist infantry was bivouacking in our front. I instantly ordered a halt, and rode on myself with a sergeant to reconnoitre. Yes, the scouts were right! There were the Juarists, sure enough; apparently just beginning to rest, as I judged from the distribution of rations. A rapid glance over their force at once convinced me they were far superior to us in numbers, and I therefore judged it advisable to fall back upon Acapulco, for I had little doubt they constituted Diaz's vanguard. I was not mistaken. My scouts came in within an hour with the news that Diaz was marching towards me with an entire brigade.

Evening had already set in as we cautiously neared the town. The moment we came in sight of the houses, we were attacked upon both sides by the band of General Paranda. A sharp engagement followed, terminated only by nightfall and the retreat of the Juarists, leaving ten men dead upon the field, while my small force was diminished by

six. I occupied the town, made requisitions upon the Alcalde for supplies and labourers, and set the latter to barricade the approaches and break up the roads.

Before withdrawing to head-quarters, I reconnoitred the vicinity of the town closely with some of my men. Just as I was upon the point of returning, a corporal of the patrol called my attention to a horseman approaching by the main road.

'He has ridden past us three times,' said my corporal.

The stranger wore a short coat, and his head was covered by a large broad-leaved felt hat, which, coupled with the darkness, prevented my getting a good look at his features. As he came up to us, the man saluted civilly, and spoke to me.

'You have a fine horse there, Señor,' was his remark.

'True,' I replied, curtly; then continued after a short pause—'You are well armed, Señor?'

The stranger started. ''Tis a necessary precaution upon a road with which one is not acquainted,' he said. 'Good evening, Señor.'

'Not so fast, my friend!' I ejaculated, laying my hand firmly upon his shoulder.

'Señor,' said the man in an angry tone, 'take

your hand from my shoulder. I am a nervous man, and my pistols are loaded.'

I laughed. 'That's little consequence,' was my reply. 'Before you continue your journey, I must know who you are, and whither you are going.'

I turned the fellow towards me, and looked sharply into his face. A quick suspicion darted into my mind. Surely I had seen those ill-favoured lineaments before.

'I know you now, Señor,' I exclaimed, 'and thank Providence for having at last given you into my hands. You are Savedro, an intimate friend of Tomas de Leon, a traitor and spy of the Juarists.'

'Well, Señor, and what if I am?' was the unabashed reply. 'Let me assure you that I have not the least desire to part company soon. I have been tracking you the last two days, and urgently wish for an interview.'

'Indeed! That wish can speedily be gratified, and may save us both trouble. Though,' I continued, as we trotted towards the town, 'it is difficult to divine what you can have to say to me, from whom you have nothing to expect but death; to me, who possess the strongest proofs of your treachery from your own mouth.'

'Ah, Señor,' implored the fellow, 'hear my

defence. I was forced by Señor Lopez to desert the Imperial cause. Upon the one side envy and hatred, upon the other employment and money; which was I to choose? The Imperial Government persecuted me through Lopez, and I was compelled to fly, to save myself from danger. Yet I have done good service to the Imperialists. Tomas de Leon has been completely led astray by me, and only used as a tool for my plans. This letter from General Mejia will prove to you that I speak the truth.'

He handed me a letter as he spoke. I ran through it by the light of the patrol lantern, and was forced to admit that, if genuine, it was satisfactory as far as it went. But it was necessary to test my prisoner's credibility further.

'Well, Señor,' I returned easily, 'excuse my mistake. The sharpest of us fall into error sometimes, and the innocent suffer.'

We rode on into the town. I gave orders that Savedro's horse should be looked to, and took its master to my apartments. There he began his explanations. From all he said it was evident that my detachment and I were surrounded on all sides, without any chance of escape. But a fact of even more immediate interest was his assurance that

Tomas de Leon was concealed in the town or its vicinity watching our movements.

'Are you certain of that?' I demanded.

'Well, yes,' he replied, hesitatingly. 'He is certainly hidden in the neighbourhood. The wood upon the shore, and the small islands lying opposite the town, enable him to change his hiding-place; and the ease with which he can get letters conveyed by the country folks to the Juarists renders him a dangerous neighbour.'

Savedro then began to sound his own praises, for it may easily be supposed I felt little inclined to place unlimited confidence in a man who, by his own admission, was both faithless and cunning. He made little claim to virtues he did not possess, and, perhaps influenced by the wine I had given him, perhaps actuated by natural garrulity, seemed upon the present occasion particularly disposed to be frank. He was the man in whom the Imperial Government had placed sufficient trust to send him to the United States frontier, to observe and report upon the progress of affairs in that quarter. At times he had coquetted with Cortinas, at times with Escobedo; always under the pretext of serving the interests of the Empire. It was easy to perceive from this part of his explanations that he

was now involved in fresh schemes, to further which an appearance of devotion to the Imperial Government was essential. I determined, therefore, upon keeping so slippery a fish under my immediate eye, and told him my decision. He heard it with apparent resignation, nor did his countenance fall when I gave orders in his hearing that he was not to be allowed to leave the town without my permission, and was to be kept under constant surveillance.

Next morning I had search made for the hiding-place of Tomas de Leon. All the streets were closed, and the houses carefully examined. I had just entered the hotel on the Plaza with my sergeant to make enquiries, when we suddenly heard loud shouts among my people outside. We hurried out, and learned from the groom holding the horses that some of the soldiers were giving chase to a suspicious-looking fellow lurking in the ruins of a dilapidated convent, just opposite the hotel. Guided by the clash of swords, I hastened to the spot. The moment Tomas de Leon—for the fugitive was really the man we sought—perceived me, he ceased all resistance, looked me boldly and sternly in the face, and never uttered a sound. Not a trace of fear or embarrassment, or even of

surprise, was visible upon his features, but in their place was to be read determination to brave his danger, mixed with just perhaps a slight doubt how far that peril might extend.

I looked long and steadfastly at the rascal before I could trust myself to speak. Then I suddenly drew my sword, set the point to his throat, and told him briefly to prepare for death.

Hardy as he was, the prospect of instant dissolution overcame him. Involuntarily he closed his eyes; the blood slowly deserted his cheeks, leaving them ash-coloured and wan; yet he never trembled.

'If,' said he, with a feeble smile, 'Señor has made up his mind to kill me, let him thrust. Fate cannot be escaped, and all prayers are useless.'

I relaxed my grasp of the prisoner, ordered the sergeant to lock him up in the convent tower, and keep strict watch. An hour afterwards I went to the place in which he was confined, taking Savedro with me.

'Your days are numbered,' I said, as I entered the room, 'though it is not by my hand you shall die, but by that of the provost-marshal. Your treachery and deception towards the Imperial Government have sealed your fate. If you have

anything to bring forward—not by way of justification, for of that I'll hear nothing, but in order to atone in some degree for your rascalities—now is the time.'

The prisoner looked at me steadily, but did not answer a word.

'Remember,' I continued, 'that silence will procure your instant execution.'

The corners of his mouth quivered, but still he looked at me, and still he did not speak.

'You think perhaps I would not dare to put you to death without stronger evidence?' I went on. 'Dismiss that hope from your mind. Your accomplice is in my hands, fully prepared to accuse you, in order to save himself.'

I turned to the door to call in Savedro, waiting without, but before I could raise my voice Tomas de Leon started from the brooding reverie in which he had apparently been sunk.

'Why should I hesitate?' he said slowly. 'Were he in my position, would he not give me up to the rope? Señor,' continued the fatalist, turning to me with his ordinary unconcerned air, 'your eloquence has conquered. Listen. To-morrow night General Paranda, who has been reinforced by a company, intends to attack the town on the north

side, while Don Garcia with one hundred men assaults upon the east. Both parties will be before the town at twelve punctually. The General brings a piece of artillery.'

'Remember,' I warned him, 'that if you lie, you shall hang without mercy.'

'Señor,' replied the man, 'I speak the truth. If life were not so dear to me, you should have cut me to pieces alive before I would have told you what I have. Know, Señor, that a Mexican——'

Satisfied that I had extracted as much information as I was likely to obtain, I cut his further protests short by calling up the guard, and again enjoining them to look to his safe custody. To make all sure, the prisoner was transferred to the inner apartment of the tower, the doors carefully locked and bolted, and a watch posted in the room without.

Returning to head-quarters, I held a short consultation with the captain of the steamer 'Mexico' as to the arrangements for the following night. This officer promised to have two boats in waiting at the beach, ready, in case of necessity, to take off myself and my men. He tendered his assistance with such hearty goodwill that I saw I could rely upon his active co-operation.

CHAPTER XXI.

FAREWELL TO MEXICO.

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NEXT DAY I got the baggage down to the shore, and made every preparation to meet the attack. The small force at my disposal terribly hampered my efforts. All I could do was to detail twenty-five men under command of the sergeant to encounter Don Garcia on the east, and to post myself on the northward with the remainder of the detachment.

Paranda came on slowly shortly after midnight. We greeted him with a crashing volley that rang out loudly through the stillness of the night, and the engagement in this quarter began. As Don Garcia had not yet appeared, I drew off a portion of the men posted on the east, and was thus enabled to hold General Paranda in check. The struggle had lasted about an hour, when Don Garcia and his guerillas came on to the attack. Our position now soon became very critical. I had already four or five killed and several wounded.

But choice we had none. We were compelled to fight on or die, for surrender, when no quarter would be granted, was useless. The only chance that remained for us was to fall back slowly towards the town, in the hope of gaining the boats promised by the captain of the 'Mexico.' I sent a messenger to the shore, but he came back with the assurance that they were not yet in sight.

The engagement continued, and my small force melted away with awful rapidity. In the most favourable case, I could not expect to hold out more than another hour. My uneasiness and excitement grew to such a pitch that I could hardly control myself sufficiently to give the requisite orders. Messenger after messenger came back from the beach with the same dispiriting report—'No boats; none in sight.'

At last I could stand the suspense no longer. Taking advantage of a slight pause in the attack, caused by a well-executed charge that had driven our assailants momentarily back, I instructed my sergeant to keep the men well together and continue the retreat, and then set off at full speed for the shore. As I passed the convent, I halted a moment to assure myself that the doors of Tomas de Leon's prison were still secure. The watch had

been drawn off to the field some time before, and I was relieved to find everything dark, quiet, and apparently safe. Then I got down to the shore.

The night was calm and windless. Between sea and sky hovered a slight mist, through which from time to time peeped forth the pale twinkle of the stars. The moon had risen, but the vapours surrounding her disc caused her to shed a sickly watery light, and thick darkness reigned among the cliffs and ravines of the bay, wherever the shadows fell. The sheen of the waves and the glitter of the white sand upon the shore were the only objects clearly visible.

The spot from which I peered out anxiously over the waters was wrapped in complete obscurity. I had not been watching long before the figure of a man rose up before me on the left. As soon as he came out into the light along the glittering sand, and was only a few paces distant, I recognised to my intense astonishment the features of my prisoner, Tomas de Leon. I was upon the point of rushing towards him, when a second figure emerged from the same direction.

'Aha!' cried the new arrival. 'Tomas de Leon! The very man of whom I was in search!'

'Welcome, Don Garcia!' returned the escaped

man. 'So you have come at last. It is well you do, however, for there is not a moment to lose. These Imperialist scoundrels intend escaping in boats, and we must not allow that. Everyone of them must bite the dust.'

'Undoubtedly, Señor. No quarter for the Austrian dogs.'

'I was betrayed by Savedro,' continued De Leon, 'and taken prisoner. One course only remained open to me, to escape the rope. I was forced to tell the Imperial officer the town would be attacked to-night. They shut me up in a tower—the fools!—never taking the precaution to search my pockets. Waiting till all was still, my tools easily procured my release, and I hastened here to keep my appointment with you. Now go back quickly, and hurry up your men. We must catch the birds as they are upon the point of taking wing.'

Don Garcia disappeared. I was about to follow his example, when a signal-shot thundered across the bay. Straining my eyes, I beheld the welcome sight of a couple of boats, fully manned with well-armed crews, pulling rapidly towards the shore.

The quick report of firearms close at hand, coupled with the clash of swords, the trample of

feet, the sound of oaths, cries, and curses, told that the tide of battle was rolling down towards the shore. The boats' keels grated on the strand, and a number of sturdy fellows jumped upon the beach to keep off the enemy and assist our escape. We had already got some of the wounded on board, when the forces of Don Garcia and General Paranda, combined, charged down upon us with incredible fury. A desperate hand-to-hand struggle ensued. Numbers of my men were cut down, while a few managed to escape the massacre under cover of the darkness.

In the confusion I lost sight of Tomas de Leon, who had been vainly pressing forward, for Savedro fought like a lion at my side. I shouted to my people to make for the boats, and rushed forward to cover their retreat. The Mexicans in the front gave back, but others upon the flanks rushed in to cut us off from the shore. Three heavy slashes from my good sword hewed me a path through the assailants.

As I was upon the point of jumping into the boat, Tomas de Leon seized me by the shoulder with a loud cry of 'Caracho Austriaco!' and his sword slightly grazed my ribs. I swung myself free from his grasp, and turned upon him.

The moon at this moment broke through the clouds, and we could see each other plainly face to face. Foot to foot, and hand to hand, we closed in mortal combat, with a savage determination such as only the bitterest enemies can feel. Very few passes decided the fight. My opponent's weapon touched me on the left breast, but in recovering his guard he left a fatal opening, and in a second my sword passed twice through his body. He fell bleeding at my feet. I sprang into the boat, which instantly pushed off, and after the exchange of a few parting shots with the enemy upon the shore, we reached the 'Mexico' in safety.

Tomas de Leon was not the only Mexican of note who fell in that hasty skirmish. Don García also was killed by a bullet through the brain. Of my own men, fifteen only accompanied me on board the French steamer; several others, being well mounted, escaped into the open country, and ultimately got to Vera Cruz. Still our loss was large, and it is but poor comfort to reflect that it was exceeded by that of the enemy.

The 'Mexico' left the harbour the following day, and I found myself for the fourth time upon the Gulf of Mexico. Leaning over the deck, and gazing into the blue waters carrying me

homewards after so long a series of eventful adventures, the past seemed almost like a dream, as memory presented picture after picture in vivid panorama before my mind. Head winds rendered the voyage tedious, but after a run of fourteen days we landed at New York upon April 18, 1867.

Herewith ends the story of my career in Mexico. Although I suffered much, although my courage was nearly exhausted by the many hardships I had to endure, yet I would not willingly lose the lessons I have learnt from my short yet arduous career in a foreign land. No. If I am asked by what the present is best rendered worthy, and the past is best held sacred, I answer with a single word.

That word is: EXPERIENCE.

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